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THE CRITICAL GAME

THE CRITICAL GAME

BY

JOHN MACY

Author of "The Spirit of American Literature," etc.

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Publishers New York

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To
ROGER IRVING LEE

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THE CRITICAL GAME

THE CRITICAL GAME.

CRITICISM is one form of the game of writing. It differs from other forms only as whist differs from poker and as tennis differs from golf. The motives are the same, the exercise of the player's brain and muscles, and the entertainment of the spectators, from whom, if the player be successful, he derives profit, livelihood, applause, and fame. The function of criticism at the present time, and at all times, is the function of all literature, to be wise, witty, eloquent, instructive, humourous, original, graceful, beautiful, provocative, irritating, persuasive. That is, it must possess some of the many merits that can be found in any type of literature; it must in some way be good writing. There is no other sound principle to be discovered in the treatises on the art of criticism or in fine examples of the art. Whether Charles Lamb writes about Shakespeare or Christ's Hospital or ears is of relatively slight importance compared with the question whether in one essay or another Lamb is at one of his incomparable best moments of inspiration.

Remy de Gourmont says, apropos Brunetière's views of Renan:

> Contre l'opinion commune, la critique est peut-être le plus subjectif de tous les genres littéraires; c'est une confession perpétuelle; en croyant analyser les œuvres d'autrui, c'est soi-même que l'on dévoile et que l'on expose au public. . . . voulant expliquer et contredire Renan, M. Brunetière s'est une fois de plus confessé publiquement.

That is true, except that it may be doubted whether one type of literature is more subjective than another, since all types are subjective. Even a work that belongs, according to De Quincey's definition, to the literature of information as distinguished from the literature of power, even an article in an encyclopædia, an article, say, on Patagonia, has a man behind it; it cannot be quite objective and impersonal.

Criticism should not be set off too sharply from other forms of literary expression. It has no special rights, privileges, and authority; and at the same time it has no special disabilities that consign it to a secondary place in the divisions of literature. In any unit of art, a sonnet or an epic, a short story or a novel, a little review or a history of æsthetics, a man is trying to say something. And the value of what he says must, of course, depend partly on the essential interest of his subject; but it depends to a greater extent on the skill with which he puts words together, creates interest in himself. Arnold's essay on

Keats is less Keats than Arnold. It could not have been if Keats had not existed. But the beauty of that sequence of words, that essay in criticism, is due to the genius of Arnold. Francis Thompson on Shelley adds no cubit to the stature of Shelley, but Thompson's interpretation is a marvellous piece of poetic prose which cannot be deducted without enormous loss from the works of Thompson, from English criticism. We read Pater on Coleridge, not for Coleridge but for Pater, and we read Coleridge for Coleridge, not for Shakespeare. Thackeray's lecture on Swift, which is full of animosity and miscomprehension, is a well-written revelation of Thackeray. Trollope's book on Thackeray, which is full of friendship and admiration, is an ill-written revelation of Trollope.

Some men of great ability, like Trollope, who have written good books themselves, lack the faculty, whatever it may be, of writing in an entertaining fashion about the books of other men. Swinburne is a striking example. His knowledge of literature was immense, and he had the enthusiasms and contempts that make the critical impulse; but except when the poet in him seized the pen and made a passage of lyrical prose, his excursions into criticism are bewildering and difficult to read. His sonnets on Dickens, Lamb, and the Elizabethans are worth more than all his prose. On the other hand, Lamb, who wrote like an angel about the Elizabethan dramatists, failed completely as a dramatist.

Every man who plays with literature at all must be ambitious to succeed in some form of art that may be called "creative," as distinct from critical — a distinction which, since Arnold taught us our lesson, we know does not exist. The reason for this ambition is plain enough. A novel or a play reaches a wider audience than a volume of essays, however admirable; it has a more obvious claim to originality, and it brings the author a greater degree of practical satisfaction. A few doubly or trebly gifted men, Dryden, Coleridge, Poe, Arnold, Pater, Henley, Stevenson, Henry James, could do first-rate work in more than one *genre,* including criticism. And a good case could be made out to prove that a man who knows how to handle words in many ways is on the whole the best qualified to comment on the art of handling words. However that may be, it is certain that in English literature a critic who is only a critic seldom wins a conspicuous position. Even Johnson was something more than a critic, and he was, with all due respect, somewhat less than a good one. And Hazlitt, who was a good one, wrote on many subjects besides books and art.

Because so many little people went into the business of reviewing and presumed to sit in judgment on their betters, criticism early got a bad name in English literature, and not all the dignified work of Arnold and others has yet succeeded in restoring the reputation of the word or the art. Criticism came to mean censure, a connotation which persists in current speech. The degeneration had already taken place in Dryden's time, and he protested that "they wholly mistake the nature of criticism who think that its business is principally to find fault." Authors of imaginative works became resentful and felt that the critic was an enemy, a nasty and incompetent enemy, as indeed he often was. An interesting compilation could be made—and probably Saintsbury or somebody else has done it—of the retorts and counter-attacks made by writers of other things than criticism against the whole critical crew. Here are a few examples:

Gentle Jane Austen in "Northanger Abbey" amusingly defends her heroine's habit of reading novels:

> I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom, so common with novel writers, of degrading, by their contemptuous censure, the very performances to the number of which they are themselves adding . . . if the heroine ot one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? . . . Let us leave it to the Reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans.

That sounds as if Miss Austen's pride in her craft had been wounded. I know of no record that anybody ever spoke ill of her while she was living.

Scott, whose generous soul was hurt by the harsh squabbles of the Scottish reviewers, took a shot at the tribe in the letter which appears in the introductory note to "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" in the Cambridge edition:

> As to the herd of critics, it is impossible for me to pay much attention to them, for, as they do not understand what I call poetry, we talk in a foreign language to each other. Indeed, many of these gentlemen appear to me to be a sort of tinkers, who, unable to *make* pots and pans, set up for *menders* of them, and, God knows, often make two holes in patching one.

The idea that the critic is a secondary fellow who cannot make first-hand literature goes back to Dryden, the champion and exemplar of sound criticism, who wrote in "The Conquest of Granada":

> They who write ill and they who ne'er durst write
> Turn critics out of mere revenge and spite.

Landor repeats the idea in a "Conversation" between Southey and Porson, in which Porson says: "Those who have failed as writers turn reviewers."

Writers and other artists are usually sensitive and often vain. Some have taken critics too seriously, have given them too much importance while pretending to despise them, and have allowed themselves to be stung instead of brushing the flies off. Thanks to Shelley, the idea became current that the "viperous murderer," the critic, killed Keats. It was not so. Keats died of tuberculosis. Though he was, like all poets, delicately organized, he was an unusually sane and self-reliant man, quite sure of the value of his work. Moreover, in a day when rough criticism was the fashion, the critics were, though stupid, not especially rough on Keats. Shelley's *"J'accuse"* is flaming poetry, but—it is not good criticism. Byron had the right idea. With his superior wit and vigour he gave the reviewers ten blows for one and used his opponents as the occasion of a delightful exhibition of boxing. The reviewers were knocked out in the second round. "English Bards and Scottish Reviewers" is still in the ring, as I have pleasantly discovered by re-reading it.

The notion that the critic will, or can, do damage to the artist persisted long after Shelley and is perhaps still believed. In 1876, Sidney Lanier, a man of good sense and great bravery, whom the flies, or the "vipers," had but lightly nipped, wrote in a letter to his father:

> What possible claim can contemporary criticism set up to respect—that criticism which crucified Jesus, stoned Stephen, hooted Paul for a madman, tried Luther for a criminal, tortured Galileo, bound Columbus in chains, drove Dante into a hell of exile, made Shakespeare write the sonnet, "When in disgrace of fortune and men's eyes," gave

> Milton £5 for "Paradise Lost," kept Samuel Johnson cooling his heels on Lord Chesterfield's doorstep, reviled Shelley as an unclean dog, killed Keats, cracked jokes on Gluck, Schubert, Beethoven, Berlioz, and Wagner, and committed so many other impious follies and stupidities?

Lanier's charges are not all quite true. He mixed up the sins of criticism with the sins of politics, economics, and other dreadful affairs. But his outburst is a good illustration of the quarrel between the "author" and the "critic." Especially when the author has for the moment lost his sense of humour.

The best treatment of the critic by the author, as also, perhaps, of the author by the critic, is humourous. In "One of Our Conquerors," Meredith lays out the art critics:

> He had relied and reposed on the dicta of newspaper critics; who are sometimes unanimous, and are then taken for guides, and are fatal.

Washington Irving, in a delightful little paper called "Desultory Thoughts on Criticism," quietly places the reviewer in the low seat where he belongs. I shall not quote from the essay, but merely refer the reader to it and especially to the introductory quotation from Buckingham's "Rehearsal," in which the critic is set in a still lower seat.

Finally—for these quotations—Dr. Holmes, who lived all his life surrounded by praise and comfort, puts his finger gently on the parasitism of the critic. The passage is in "The Poet at the Breakfast Table":

> Our *epizoic* literature is becoming so extensive that nobody is safe from its *ad infinitum* progeny. A man writes a book of criticisms. A *Quarterly Review* criticises the critic. A *Monthly Magazine* takes up the critic's critic. A *Weekly Journal* criticizes the critic of the critic's critic, and a daily paper favours us with some critical remarks on the performance of the writer in the *Weekly*, who has criticised the critical notice in the *Monthly* of the critical essay in the *Quarterly* on the critical work we started with. And thus we see that as each flea "has smaller fleas that on him prey," even the critic himself cannot escape the common lot of being bitten.

To what extent is the critic parasitic? To this extent: he is dealing with ideas already expressed, with cooked and predigested food. It is easier for any mind to think of something to say about an idea that has already gone through cerebral processes than it is to take the raw material of life and make something. You may sit on a bench in the park and watch the people and never, for the life of you, conceive a good story. Then O. Henry comes along and makes twenty stories. After he has done it, you can write something very brilliant about what O. Henry saw from the same bench that you sat on. And you can make neat remarks about the resemblances and differences between O. Henry, Boccaccio, and H. C. Bunner. That may be worth doing, if your remarks are really neat. For then you may be readable.

And that is the function of the critic, to be readable, to make literature of a sort. The critic is always playing his own game, selfish, egotistical, expressive of his own will, and no more disinterested than was Arnold himself when he took his pen in hand to slay a Philistine or to sign a contract with his manager for a lecture tour in America. In playing his own game the critic may help the game of another author by crying him up and advertising him. But a hundred critics, clamouring in the fatal unanimity at which Meredith pokes fun, cannot make the fortunes of a book or influence at the creative source the work of a man sufficiently strong and original to be worth reading. And the same hundred critics with lofty hatred of bad writing cannot prevent bad books from being written and read. George Eliot made it a rule not to read criticisms of her work because she found it necessary to be preserved "from that discouragement as an artist which ill-judged praise no less than ill-judged blame tends to produce in me." The implication that criticism, favorable or unfavorable, is ill-judged gives us an addition to our notes on what authors think of critics. I doubt whether, if that strong-minded woman had read everything that was written about her before and after her death, she would have altered a single sentence. Did Hardy stop writing novels because of the ignorant attacks on "Jude"? I would not accept without question Hardy's own word for it. I suspect that it was his own inward impulse, not determined by the opinions of the other people, that turned his energy to that stupendous epic, "The Dynasts."

To what extent can the critic play the game of the reader, be guide and teacher, maintain standards, elevate taste, make the best ideas prevail? Not to a very great extent. Criticism, good or bad, is read only by the sophisticated, by people whose tastes are formed and who can take care of themselves in matters literary and intellectual. Who that had not already looked into Shakespeare and Plato ever heard of Pater? The journals that print intelligent articles about literature and art have a small circulation; they are missionaries to the converted; their controversial discussions of general principles or of the merits of an individual are only family feuds. Critics play with each other in a professional game. The few amateurs who sit as spectators are a select minority who have seen the game before and who, though not in the professional class, are instructed, cultivated, have some knowledge of the plays. The critical game is enjoyed by those who are themselves critical and least in need of enlightenment.

Nevertheless, it is a great game—when it is played well.

The author of a book on golf illustrates it with the stances and swings of better players than himself; he makes an anthology. A collection of essays by various authors would illustrate the game better than the plays of a single critic, a much more competent critic than I. I do not pretend that the essays in this book are first-rate specimens of how the strokes should be made. But even a small fellow may flatter himself that he has an individual way of looking at things which may give unity of interest to a collection of papers. At any rate he has a right to exhibit his methods, and nobody is obliged to watch him or play with him.

Most of these papers have been published in reviews and magazines, *The Freeman, The Dial, The New Republic,* the *Boston Herald,* the *Atlantic Monthly,* the *Literary Review* of the *New York Evening Post,* the *New York Tribune.*

The essay on Joseph Conrad appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1906. I am proud only of the date. Sixteen years ago Conrad was not universally recognized; some of his best work had not been done; and many finer essays than mine had not yet been written. If I was not the first American critic to pursue that mysterious mariner across enchanted seas, at least I can swear before the critical court of admiralty that the waters were not crowded with little craft like mine. It is a pleasure to read again a few letters which hail me for hailing Conrad and which make me believe that I did introduce the master to a few readers. If so, I have not lived in vain.

But my pride is somewhat reduced by the consideration that any reader intelligent enough to look at a literary essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* must sooner or later have discovered Conrad for himself without the assistance of a critic. However, I hug with amusement the memory of a Harvard professor who threw up his hands and said: "My God! I had no idea there was a man living who could write like that!" To the professorial mind in those days English literature stopped officially with the death of Browning or, at the latest, with the deaths of Stevenson and Pater. The essay itself is a little professorial, enfeebled by a sort of Boston-Harvard timidity, utterly failing to express the wild joy which I felt. The second paper on Conrad, written fifteen years later, is not so hesitant. It is interesting to look again at the bibliographical footnote to the first essay and see how Conrad's few books were scattered among the publishers. I could not find "An Outcast of the Islands" except in the Tauchnitz edition. Today his work is collected. There is a handsome subscription edition. And Mr. Doubleday tells me that a new book by Conrad has an assured immediate sale of twenty to thirty thousand. Perhaps, after all, we who cheered long ago when it was not the fashion to cheer have justified our miserable existence as critics.

The essay on Tolstoy was written in the two months immediately after his death. Mr. Ellery Sedgwick asked me to write it for the *Atlantic Monthly* and then rejected it. It was published in the *New York Call.* I bear no bitter grudge against Mr. Sedgwick for returning an article that he had ordered. But I am convinced, as I read the article over again, that he is an incompetent critic of criticism. Sometimes editors and publishers, whose business it is to provide the arena and assemble the spectators, play their part of the game stupidly. But on the whole I think they are more than generous to second-rate performers. If I owned a magazine I should be very grudging of the space I gave to literary chatter—except my own.

A critical friend—we critics suffer from each other—admonishes me that in the foregoing remarks I have treated an important art in a flippant manner. Certainly I am not so foolish as to take my essays very seriously, and I believe that much modern criticism is too solemn, that if we fooled with literature in a lighter spirit we should enjoy it more and be happier.

Charles Lamb was not afraid to kick up his heels, and yet nobody will accuse him of being a trivial clown. Oscar Wilde was a man of wit, sometimes a buffoon, and he could puncture a stupid piece of work with ridicule. But the prevailing tone of his best essays is one of dignity and sobriety.

Good criticism is as important as anything that man can put on paper. Moreover, certain subjects must be treated by the critic with the utmost gravity. It would be owlishly humourless, uncritical, not to take Tolstoy seriously. Essays about the greater men of genius and the deeper problems of art must be substantial, solid, or they are inappropriate, out of key.

But it is possible to be sane and erudite without being leaden, to approach a noble subject earnestly without striking an attitude of priestly austerity. Some of our sincerest contemporaries, both the academic and the rebellious, seem to me to worry about literature, as if it were an invalid that needed nursing or a dead man about whom the last word must be said before next Thursday afternoon. They do not get enough fun out of it. They forget that Pater, who was not a mad wag and not a dilettante, could sometimes see the gaiety of things and was willing to be inconclusive.

Criticism is important. The best contemporaneous English criticism is not good enough. And even in France, where we have been taught to look for sound critics, Flaubert thought as late as 1869 that criticism was still in its infancy. He wrote to George Sand: "You speak of criticism in your last letter to me, telling me that it will soon disappear. I think, on the contrary, that it is, at most only dawning . . . When will they (critics) be artists, only artists, but really artists? Where do you know a criticism? Who is there who is anxious about the work in itself, in an intense way? . . . The *unconscious* poetic expression? Where it comes from? its composition, its style? The point of view of the author? Never. That criticism would require great imagination and great sympathy." To which George Sand replied with good sense: "The artist is too much occupied with his own work to forget himself in estimating that of others."

Since then France has had a generation of critics, some of whom were artists. If Hennequin, who thought he was a scientific critic, was not an artist, if De Gourmont, who smiled wisely at the whole game, was not an artist, then the word means nothing. In England and

America criticism has not made much progress since Pater died. I know that I am punctuating literature in the manner of the academic fogies. But one of the humours of this sport is that you sometimes do things which are fouls when your opponent is guilty of them.

I come back gladly to the analogy of the game. We have, I believe, made progress in one direction. In the direction of fair play. We cannot write like Hazlitt, but we will not hit below the belt as he did sometimes. We cannot write like Arnold, and his combination of literary charm and scholarship makes us feel desperately small, but in our descent from his altitude we have freed ourselves from his major vice, his dogmatic snobbery, his bigoted liberalism. The pulpit-pounder still thrives in religion and politics; in criticism he is becoming obsolete. I am sure, or at least hopeful, that this is true in America. I think I see a slight but appreciable improvement in candour, simplicity, generosity, geniality, and fairness in attack. On the whole we are a little more sportsmanlike than some of our elders. That is all that I claim for us. Our real consolation is that the ancient and honorable game is still young, still to be played.

DANTE IN ENGLISH

DANTE IN ENGLISH

I am tempted to call the following remarks "Reading Dante for Fun." The most austere of poets should not be treated with levity. But, after all, poetry, even poetry of profound ethical and religious import, is to be enjoyed. And the simple point that I wish to make, as a mere reader with but a stumbling knowledge of Italian and almost no knowledge of the vast library of Dante scholarship, is that Dante is accessible in English. His book of magic is at least half open even to one who must forever remain partly blind and deaf to the beauty of the original. It is a great pleasure to read the convenient little volumes of the Temple Classics with the Italian text on the left-hand page and the English on the right, to read idly or study deeply, according to mood and temperament. At any rate, let us not be overcome by the solemnity of the occasion or discouraged by the difficulties, some of which the commentators have cleared away and some of which they have made more difficult.

Dr. Toynbee* finds that since 1802 the *Commedia* as a whole has been translated into English about once every four years. And he excludes from his record American translators and critics. Why did Dr. Toynbee or the British Academy make this commemorative volume so narrowly insular? English and American scholarship is one institution. And American Dantists have done good work. Though it is the fashion to scorn the Yankee bards and seers, Lowell's essay and the translations by Longfellow, Norton, and Parsons are important in the history of Dante in English, not British, literature. They had literary gifts, they knew Italian, and they were able to appreciate a universal mind. For all their provinciality their shades can afford to smile at their young countryman, Mr. Mencken, who writes: "If I have to go to hell for it, I must here set down my conviction that much of the 'Divine Comedy' is piffle." Well, he ought to go to hell—to Dante's hell, which is an entertaining and hospitable place. In the cold prose of Norton or John Carlyle, where the melody is necessarily lost, there may be some passages in which an alert modern reader cannot find great interest, but the number of lines of "piffle" is exactly none.

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*Britain's Tribute To Dante in Literature and Art. A Chronological Record of 540 Years. By Paget Toynbee. London: Published for the British Academy, 1921.

It is not to be expected that all men, even all literary men, will respond to Dante. Horace Walpole called him "extravagant, absurd, disgusting; in short, a Methodist parson in Bedlam." This is amusing, even refreshing, in view of the too pious devotion of some later Englishmen. But the eighteenth century was not the time for English appreciation of Dante, and Walpole, witty *prosateur,* was not the man to enjoy him. Dante was known, of course, to Chaucer and to the Elizabethans and Milton, and his influence on English poetry was perhaps even greater than Dr. Toynbee's record makes evident. But it is with the nineteenth century, which, *bien entendu,* was born intellectually a few years before its numerical date, that Dante becomes a power in English literature. He is, indeed, a part of the revival of English romanticism. The translations of Boyd and Cary appeared early in the century, and from then on Dante belonged to English literature, as well acclimated as any other foreign classic. The index of Dr. Toynbee's record contains the names of almost all the important English poets from Scott to Francis Thompson.

And it contains hundreds of other names, not perhaps of great importance in literature, but important in this respect, that they show the appeal of Dante to a great variety of minds, of minds not mediæval, not Catholic, not Italian. Nobody can dip into him, however superficially, without getting something. He has so much that everybody can be happy, from the Pope to the most pagan young poet. Though the true Dantist will insist that the greatest of poets must be understood, or accepted, entire, like his own God and his own universe, I propose that the anthological view of him is proper and delightful. If he is so rich and structurally perfect that no side of him can be neglected, then he is so rich and so strong that any side of him can be neglected. You can sit under a tree on the side of a mountain without comprehending the mountain, but deriving much happiness from the tree, the altitude, and the view.

The interpreters of Dante's stupendous unity are all true to Dante, in that they try to find some complete explanation of him and will tolerate no neglect of his least detail. Dante himself, for all his mystery and multiple meanings, is quite explicit about the indivisibility, the integrity, of his work. So that the episodic, incomplete view of him, which I recommend to other casual readers, is unphilosophic and amateurish. Let us concede that and at the same time let us reserve the right to be cheerfully weary of systems where the "benumbed conceiving soars." Ruskin speaks the indubitable truth: "The central man of all the world, as representing the imaginative, moral, and intellectual faculties, all at their highest, is Dante." But such a genius is too awful to contemplate, and it is more comfortable to keep this side idolatry.

Moreover, the interpreters, seeking to comprehend Dante's vast totality, do not discover complete unity among themselves. Mr. Walter Arensberg* thinks that he has unlocked the mystery, and I think that he has. But as I had a little to do with filing that key I will not say how well I think it turns in the wards of the lock; I will leave him to the mercies of other critics and merely note that six centuries after Dante's death we have a novel interpretation.

And then comes Professor Courtney Langdon** with another. One of his ideas seems to me just, though debatable—namely, that any modern man has the right to find anything in Dante that he can find, to derive the sort of joy and wisdom that suit him, the reader, whether or not Dante would recognize that reader's meaning. The poet exists for our benefit and, like the Bible, does not forbid but justifies the multitude of sects and individual expositors. That idea alone is worth Professor Langdon's labor, and it will be interesting to see how he develops it. Unfortunately, his translation is worse than useless. He simply has not the gift of English verse. His own verses, prefixed to the several canticles, are absurd doggerel; they remind one of Longfellow's lovely sonnets (the best poems he ever wrote) only by their position of naïve rivalry with the splendor that follows. And, what is more strange, Professor Langdon writes abnominable prose, such assaults upon the ear as "verse's rhythm" and "Divine Comedy's last part." If the poet exists for us, in English or Italian, one of the things to learn from him is how to write.

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*The Crytography of Dante. By Walter Arensberg. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921.

**The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. The Italian Text with a Translation in English Blank Verse and a Commentary. By Courtney Langdon. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 3 vols.

The poet exists for us. That is an excellent idea. It is our privilege to take what we enjoy and reject what we do not like or understand. I cannot be interested in Dante's ethics, which interested him so profoundly and is the bone of his thought. His "stern indignant moral," as Carlyle called it, is for me no part of the beauty of the "mystic song." I cannot regard without suspicion, even in a New Englander, Norton's statement to Dr. Dinsmore that the quality of the *Commedia,* other than its beauty, which attracted him to Dante was "his powerful exposition of moral penalties and rewards." Other than its beauty? What does that mean? If the qualities of the *Commedia* can be separated

(Dante happened to believe that they can not be), let us throw the ethics, the penalties, and rewards to the four winds. Let us keep as much as we can grasp of the beauty of the episodes, the images, the phrases, the structure, whatever gives delight.

The beauty of the fifth canto of *Inferno* does not depend on the ethical fact that the carnal sinners are punished, but on the poetic fact that their pathetic loves on earth are recalled and that their punishment is vividly, physically dramatized. The tragic pity and terror of it break through the baldest translation stripped of the enchantment of the original verse. Many English poets have been tempted to try to render that famous fifth canto. Mr. Arensberg has made the best version that I have seen. His version is in the *terza rima,* a difficult thing to manage in English, and he succeeds in making a good English poem, a shade finer than a mere *tour de force.* I doubt whether he or any other poet can so well translate the entire *Commedia* in the same form, though the attempt has been made. The *terza rima* has never been quite naturalized in our language. Even such a master as Shelley can not turn it perfectly. We imported the sonnet as easily as the apple and we made some French forms grow thriftily in our hardy garden. The *terza rima* remains artificial and foreign, peculiarly Italian and more peculiarly Dante; he made it his own and moved at ease in its exacting rigidities. He was in thought and form a diabolical magician.

In order to show the *terza rima* in English and to suggest (not to solve!) the problem of translation, let us look at three versions of the last ten lines of the fifth canto of *Inferno,* the story of Paolo and Francesca. Francesca is speaking and tells how she and her lover read the story of Lancelot and Guinevere—romance within romance! First, Norton's clear, deliberately uninspired prose:

> "When we read of the longed-for smile being kissed by such a lover, this one, who never shall be divided from me, kissed my mouth all trembling. Gallehaut was the book, and he wrote it. That day we read no farther in it!"
>
> While the one spirit said this, the other was so weeping that through pity I swooned as if I had been dying, and fell as a dead body falls.

Then Longfellow in traditional blank verse (and it is good verse; he knew his business):

> "Whenas we read of the much longed-for smile
> Being by such a noble lover kissed,
> This one, who ne'er from me shall be divided,
> Kissed me upon the mouth all palpitating.
> Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it.
> That day no farther did we read therein."
> And all the while one spirit uttered this,
> The other one did weep so that, for pity,
> I swooned away as if I had been dying,
> And fell, even as a dead body falls.

Finally, Arensberg in *terza rima*:

"When we had read how one so amorous
  Had kissed the smile that he was longing for,
This one, who always must be by me thus,
[illegible]
  Kissed me upon the mouth, trembling all o'er;
Galeot the book, and he 'twas written by!
  Upon that day in it we read no more."

So sorely did the other spirit cry,
  While the one spoke, that for the very dread
I swooned as if I were about to die,
  And I fell down even as a man falls dead.

Those versions, I submit, are all good; and I risked the tedium of repeating the same idea of Dante in the English of three different translators. Because my simple point is that Dante in English is interesting—to anybody who cares for English literature.

DANTE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

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DANTE'S *De Monarchia* is usually treated by the commentators as a mere footnote to the *Commedia;* and this subordination is justifiable because the poet in Dante overwhelms all other expressions of his genius and also because the *Commedia* contains much political philosophy, some of which *De Monarchia* elucidates. But *De Monarchia,* considered by itself, is a work of great importance. Even if by some unthinkable accident the *Commedia* had been lost and *De Monarchia* had survived, it would remain a significant treatise on the state and the papacy and would deserve to be regarded as we regard the political writings of philosophers from Plato to Hobbes. To be sure, the chief interest of the work for us lies in the fact that Dante wrote it, and it would lose some of its value if it were isolated from the rest of his thought; the amazing unity of his mind and the coherence of his purpose make a piecemeal view of any part of him essentially false. His vision of earth and heaven has a thousand aspects but no fragments. Even the unfinished works, *Il Convivio* and *De Vulgari Eloquentia,* are not fragments but are rather to be read as partial manifestations of a singular and consistent plan.

De Monarchia is a vision of earthly well-being. It is an argument, prosaic and heavy in the English translations and very difficult in the original, I should suppose, even to an excellent Latin scholar. But the argument embodies a dream of the greatest of dreamers. The first part sets forth the necessity of empire. Only under a single world-governing monarch are possible the solidarity of mankind and the fullest possible development of the human spirit. In unity man can find peace and justice. Man is made in the image of God, and God is one; wherefore man in imitation of God must make the secular world conform to the universe and set up a unique earthly dominion. In the nature of things empire is divinely ordained and this is further proved by the fact that Christ willed to be born under the Emperor Augustus.

The second part seeks to show that the Roman empire was appointed by God to rule the world. It was established by the aid of miracles, which confirm it as especially created by the will of God. Christ died under the empire; if the empire had not been the rightful temporal authority, Christ would have been punished by the agent of an unjust power, his suffering would have been unlawful and therefore the sin of Adam would not have been duly expiated. Rome was born to command, because it did, in point of fact, conquer the world, and also because the histories of its many heroes and patriots show that the Roman citizen loved right and justice.

The third part is an argument for the separation of church and state, which are independent authorities both deriving directly from God. Many false arguments for the temporal power of the church are refuted. Though the emperor, as a man, is the first son of the church and should obey it like other Christians, yet as emperor he owes allegiance only to God, whom he represents on earth in temporal matters as the pope represents God in spiritual matters. The very nature of the church, its essential spiritual function, forbids it the possession of temporal power.

Have we here, then, nothing but a defence of an empire that has been dust these many centuries, and stale scholastic arguments for the separation of church and state, a long settled question in theoretic politics and practically settled in most countries? There is much more than that in *De Monarchia* even for the most confident modern democrat, who may regard emperor and pope as twin tyrants and for whom the word "mediæval" has derogatory connotations. It is true that the empire under which Dante actually lived is dead as the empire of the Caesars and that the empire of Dante's dream was never realized in the workaday world. As a political pamphlet *De Monarchia* is obsolete without even the persistent contemporaneity of some eighteenth century tracts. In a sense Dante's treatise died at birth. Bryce, who gives an excellent summary of it in his "Holy Roman Empire," shows that this plea for empire, conceived by the supreme mind of the age, was the epitaph of the existing empire. It was, indeed, a swan-song, not of the author, who was still to take us to Paradise and put his dream in lovelier form, but of empire in the Catholic Christian sense of "holy." The empire that persisted after the thirteenth century grew further and further away not only from a poet's dream but from any practical possibility of united political authority. The solidarity of mankind was not to be achieved through Rome or Christ, and Dante was not, as he thought, announcing a new era, but summing up a passing era.

But the truth of a dream inheres in the dream itself and is measured only in a secondary way by the course of events. *De Monarchia* has for us at least the value of a pacifist tract, the noble core of which is not obscured by the strangeness of some of the reasoning or by the destruction of Dante's political milieu. Like some other pacifist documents it is the work of an aggressive militant mind. Dante had lived and suffered in a world continuously at war. The contesting powers, great and small, were so complicated that the historian has difficulty in keeping them clear. To the major quarrels between church and state and the strife of the city-republics with one or the other or both were added an internal warfare between economic classes and feuds between castes and families, all hopelessly intricate.

In this bloody confusion Dante had played the part not of closet philosopher *au-dessus de la mêlée,* but of soldier and civil official. And to the last he was temperamentally a fighter, though forced by circumstances to drop the sword for the pen. He was not in the eyes of his contemporaries what he has become for us, the supreme solitary genius exiled by an ungrateful city, but was simply one of a thousand members of a beaten party. He was not a pathetic, unappreciated poet but a pertinacious partisan who happened to be on the losing side. He knew war and misery and defeat. Yet his plea for peace is by no means that of a weary belligerent; it is that of a bellicose champion of certain principles. And so, though those principles do not appeal to us and though the expression of them is laborious, even turgid, *De Monarchia* is still hot with conviction.

The instrument of peace was the one form of government that Dante knew, the empire. Even if his genius had taken the form of vaticination (he was indeed, as it turned out, a poor prophet), he naturally could not in his time have made himself familiar with leagues of nations and Wellsian "world-states." He had to ride on a horse, not in a motor-car. And he rode, as a worldly rider, to a fall. The tragedy of the fall has in it a large element of dramatic irony because he was so splendidly sure of his ideas at exactly the moment when they were least secure.

Dante's conception of an ideal empire had nothing in common with what we now call imperialism, which is mere commercial conquest and can be led by Kaiser or democratic prime minister with equally disastrous results. Dante believed in an imperial headship for the good of all humanity. The ruler of the world was to be the servant of the world, not its master and exploiter; a supreme monarch was to be protected by his lonely authority from the temptations that beset a weak man clothed with limited and contentious authority; aloof from strife and cupidity, having all and so being beyond pride and ambition, he could be a disinterested and just administrator.

The aim of empire is universal peace—Dante begins his argument almost in the terms of Burke and with something like Burke's combination of generosity and elaborate futility—peace, "the best of those things that are ordained for our beatitude." For on peace depends the destiny of mankind to realize the full power of the human mind in thought and deed. Dante's world state is Utopia, compounded, as all Utopias must be, of wisdom and utter impossibilities, of sublime faith and facts half-understood. While he dreamed he did not believe himself a dreamer, any more than did Shelley. He believed intensely in the practical value of his vision, in its originality and its finality as a solution of the problems of the political world. He says that knowledge of monarchy has been shunned because it has no direct relation to profit, and that he will be the first to bring it from obscurity to light for the good of the world and for his own glory. The humble servant and the arrogant doctor at the bedside of the patient! It is one of the most consistent contradictions of proud souls. The reformer has found a new and sure cure and cries "Eureka!"

In spite of the practical failure of his dream, which in a sense defeats him, I do not believe that Dante's pell-mell acceptance of all stories about the greatness of Rome, with no apparent discrimination, is proof that he did not know what he was about. He was making a special plea and he pillaged history and legend to get material for the purposes of his argument. He is a dialectician animated, like all reformers, by unselfish motives, but willing to score a point if he can. We may be fairly sure that Dante was not a credulous person with a childish view of history, but a sophisticated controversialist handling his evidence for effect. Though he mingles fact and fiction and though his documentary resources were more limited than ours, yet he knew perfectly what he was trying to do, and modern attempts to gloss him in a patronizing and apologetic manner are generally mistaken.

There is a grim humour in the fate that overtakes the works of wise men. The treatise which Dante believed would bring peace to a vexed world became a matter of strife. Later Ghibellines used his argument, unfairly, of course, to support the supremacy of the empire over the church, and ecclesiastical authority retorted by condemning the book and even threatening the repose of Dante's bones. A somewhat similar quarrel arose over Hobbes's "Leviathan" three centuries later. Seeking to unite all men, the political philosopher is attacked from both sides, and if he lives he finds that he has poured oil not on troubled waters but on a fire.

Though *De Monarchia* is much more than a footnote to the *Commendia* and is worth study for its own sake, yet the unity which it seeks in the world is closely allied to the unity of Dante's celestial vision by which he tried to lead mankind to God. Mankind refused to be cured of its political pains by *De Monarchia* and even ignored it in spite of Dante's secure and growing fame (there was no English translation until the late nineteenth century). But mankind also never accepted and never will accept the supreme vision of the *Commedia.* It is a beautiful poem enjoyed by the literary, and even in Italy it is valued, quite properly, as a mere work of art. The world has never paid much attention to Dante's declared purpose to bring mankind through art to God. So that in one way of regarding him, which may perhaps be his way, he failed in the *Commedia* as he did in *De Monarchia.* The world of thinking and acting men, whose salvation Dante believed he could work by verse and prose, remains disunited and contentious, weaponed with such bitterness of heart and methods of destruction as the dreamer of *Inferno* never dreamed.

NIETZSCHE

NIETZSCHE

It is more than thirty years since Nietzsche's work was finished and darkness fell upon that mighty intellect. In 1917, Mr. W. M. Salter, who certainly knows the bibliography of Nietzsche, wrote:

> I can not make out that his influence is appreciable now—at least in English-speaking countries. . . . He has, indeed, given a phrase and perhaps an idea or two to Mr. Bernard Shaw, a few scattering scholars have got track of him (I know of but two or three in America), the great newspaper and magazine-writing and reading world has picked up a few of his phrases, which it does not understand.

The preface of Frau Foerster-Nietzsche's edition of her brother's correspondence with Wagner is dated, Weimar, 1914, and the English translation was published in 1921. Dr. Oscar Levy's preface to his selection from the five volumes of Nietzsche's correspondence,* published in Germany between the years 1900-1909, is dated August, 1921.

So, although Nietzsche's works are now all, or nearly all, to be read in English, he is not quite an old story which every literate child should know. Professional students of philosophy seemed to have missed him or to have tardily recognized him, and the mere casual reader of philosophy may quietly dodge Mr. Mencken's bludgeon: "Only blockheads to-day know nothing of them [Nietzsche's ideas] and only fools are unshaken by them." That sort of aggressiveness on the part of a champion of Nietzsche will not help the master's ideas to prevail; though it may seem to be a disciple's repetition of Nietzsche's superb arrogance, it is really not true to his spirit. For Nietzsche attacked thoughts and thinkers, quarrelled with opponents who were somewhere near his size, ignored the opinions of the brainless multitude, and was content to wait for time and the slow-moving world to find him out.

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* "Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche." Edited by Dr. Oscar Levy. Authorized Translation by Anthony M. Ludovico. New York: Doubleday Page & Co.

Certainly he can not be jammed down our throat, and quite as certainly his stimulating and cathartic doses can not be snatched from our lips by moralistic prohibitionists. It is possible, of course, for a doctor to take advantage of one's innocence and ignorance and put one to sleep with drugs. That was my own experience. Dr. Paul Elmer More stole up on me in the dark with a soporific little book, the first I had ever read about Nietzsche. When I came to, the world was at war. A wild German philosopher, who had been quoted by a brutal German general named Bernhardi, was responsible for the violation of Belgian women. This was manifestly absurd, but there was no time to investigate and explain, even for one's private satisfaction, the causes of this ridiculous misunderstanding not only of an individual philosopher but of the relation of book-philosophy to appallingly unphilosophic crimes.

It is amazing to find that the absurdity persists, that it is necessary for Dr. Levy to try to prove in 1921 that Nietzsche did not incite the Germans to a war of conquest! Has not the hysteria sufficiently subsided for wise men to quit wasting their energies in a contest with spooks? It was part of Nietzsche's work to ridicule ghosts and blow away myths, and that he should have become a myth himself is an irony that he might have enjoyed. He gloried in being misunderstood. The true philosopher has always been in lonely opposition to the dominant ideals of his time. It is in a tone not of resentment or complaint but of haughty satisfaction that he writes to Georg Brandes, in the last year of his intellectual life:

> Your opinion of present-day Germans is more favourable than mine . . . . all profound events escape them. Take, for example, my "Beyond Good and Evil." What bewilderment it has caused them. I have not heard of a single intelligent utterance about it, much less of an intelligent senti-

> ment. I believe that it has not dawned on the most well-intentioned of my readers that here is the outcome of a sane philosophic sensibility, and not a medley of a hundred outworn paradoxes and heterodoxes. Not a soul has ever experienced the same sort of thing that I have. I never meet anyone who has been through a thousandth part of the same passionate struggle.

Nietzsche's philosophic solitude accounts in part for the excellence of his letters. In his struggles with the world, and his wilful alienation from it, he clung passionately to the few who were allied to him by the ties of blood, friendship, or intellectual sympathy. The letters contain no philosophic ideas which he did not express again and again in his professional writings. They do contain something else, however, moods, emotions, pleasures and private difficulties, intimacies which are never quite apart from the incessant battle of thought yet belong to moments of comparative ease when the soldier is off duty. This philosopher, whose work is so intensely personal, who says that he wrote his books with his whole body and life, did not completely express himself in his books. He poured his soul into them and was honestly naked and unashamed. But for all his autobiographical candor, his work is not a promiscuous confession. He labored over his paragraphs like an artist, calculated their effect, and made them personal only in so far as suited his philosophic purpose. There remains a sensitive and reticent Nietzsche who revealed himself to his friends alone.

He was fortunate in his friends. When he writes in the preface of "Human, All-Too-Human," that he has evolved an as yet non-existent company of free spirits, because he needs them and because they are some compensation for lack of friends, he is posing in a philosophic attitude which is quite justified by his experience as a thinker and writer but which is not quite true to the private history of Friedrich Nietzsche. He never lacked friends, and his isolation was in great measure self-imposed. The most distinguished friend he lost was Wagner; the break came late in the older man's life, and it seems to have been the younger man who disrupted the friendship.

Even without Wagner, Nietzsche's correspondents are numerous and varied, as many and of as many kinds as a wise man needs, if he chooses to make the most of them. The lonely philosopher was not neglected as man and brother. He preferred to flock by himself. His ill health rather than the animosity of his countrymen drove him out of Germany; and he was happiest, as close as he ever came to happiness, when he concentrated his energy in his work. He makes a philosophic virtue of necessity, affects to despise what he can not have, laments his solitude and is proud of it. To his sister he writes:

> You can not think how lonely and out of it I always feel when I am in the midst of all the kindly Tartufferie of those people whom you call 'good,' and how intensely I yearn at times for a man who is honest and who can talk even if he were a monster, but of course I should prefer discourse with demi-gods. . . . Oh, this infernal solitude!

A few months later, when this aged philosopher is forty, he writes to an old friend that all the people he loves belong to the past and regard him with merely merciful indulgence.

> We see each other, we talk in order to avoid being silent—we still write each other in order to avoid being silent. Truth, however, glances from their eyes, and these tell me (I hear it well enough): 'Friend Nietzsche, you are now quite alone!'
>
> That's what I have lived and fought for!

The last sentence may be taken in two ways. It may mean that Nietzsche strove for isolation, or it may be interpreted bitterly: "So *that's* what I get from my friends for all my labor and struggle!" Perhaps both meanings are there. The letter ends: "Ah, dear friend, what an absurdly silent life I lead! So much alone, so much alone! So 'childless'! Remain fond of me; I am truly fond of you." That sounds like a not too human cry of hunger for affection. The man who prefers demi-gods and is confident that he would be worthy of their companship is not immune from the pangs of ordinary mortals.

Nietzsche had a self-critical knowledge of his own needs and nature, and, so far as circumstances permitted, he followed the course that pleased him. He sometimes groaned but he never whined. In a letter to his sister, who had evidently suggested the possibility of marriage, he says that he cheerfully accepts the disadvantages of independence. The list of requirements that he lays down are enough to make us congratulate the impossible she whom he wisely refrained from marrying. "I know the women folk of half Europe," he writes, "and wherever I have observed the influence of women on men, I have noticed a sort of gradual decline as the result." That is one of the philosopher's amusing errors. He did not know women folk at all; the most fatuous, almost the only fatuous, passages in his works and his letters are those about the ladies, and his letters to ladies are the declarations of a free spirit shying off from something "agreeable though perhaps a trifle dangerous."

Nietzsche is at his best, of course, when he writes to distinguished men, the few who recognized his genius and made him glow in his cold solitude. Nietzsche craved recognition; his contempt for fame was largely a contempt for sour grapes. Brandes and Strindberg put wreaths on his head, and he was proud of them. He writes to Strindberg:

> I am the most powerful intellect of the age, condemned to fulfill a stupendous mission . . . It is possible that I have explored more terrible and more questionable worlds of thought than anyone else, but simply because it is in my nature to love the silent backwater. I reckon cheerfulness among the proofs of my philosophy.

A man who can write like that of himself is the happiest of mortals, for he knows that he belongs among the immortals.

TOLSTOY

TOLSTOY

I

TOLSTOY closes the second part of "Sevastopol" with these words: "The hero of my tale, whom I love with all the power of my soul, whom I have tried to portray in all his beauty, who has been, is, and ever will be beautiful, is Truth." That sentence was written when Tolstoy was twenty-seven. For fifty years, in novels, tales, essays, and exhortations, he celebrated his hero with unflagging devotion. The deeds and lineaments of the hero are not always as other men have seen them, but the identity, the character of the hero is never in doubt. The hero changes and utters conflicting wisdom, not because of the worshiper's inconstancy, but because Tolstoy develops, because he outgrows and disavows his previous selves and violates consistency between one book and another in his zeal to find consistency between his next book and Truth.

In ceaseless pursuit of Truth, Tolstoy is led through the most stirring intellectual and moral experiences which modern man has undergone.

He is part of all that we have met; from the remotest of European countries, from a moment in the world's thought that is already well behind us, his messages have encircled the globe and modify the living ideas of today. He touched all departments of thought and left none as it had been.

He plunged into the nineteenth century warfare of religion and science, found that both parties were priest-ridden and arrogant, and wrested from both the right of the individual to a simple faith and to knowledge free from the cant of the laboratory. The increasing grumble of the contest between privilege and labor—the most portentous war the world has seen and not yet at its crisis—assaulted his ears; he hearkened while most other members of the narrow circle of culture were deaf or indifferent, and he took his stand on the side of the workers against his own rank and kin. He laid bare the motives of war, in which he had drawn a guilty sword, and became a militant champion of peace. The unholy alliance of culture, religion, and civil authority he strove to dissolve by broadsides against each member of the triune tyranny, and so he conceived a new theory of art, a new reading of the gospels, and an anarchism so individual that it excludes most other anarchists. Under the solemnity of marriage and the thin poetry of romance he discerned the cloven hoof of self-indulgence, and he shocked the world with a virile puritanism, so powerful in its terms, so subversive of our timid codes that bashful Morality shrank from her bravest defender.

All the main thoroughfares of nineteenth century thought crossed before the doorway of Tolstoy's house. He trafficked with all the passengers, but joined no special group. Even his own disciples he allowed to go their own way; he took no part in their organization and left them to make their own interpretation and their own application of his teachings. Loving all mankind, having sympathetic knowledge of all sorts and conditions of men, he was nevertheless strangely solitary. At the end of his life his devotion to his ideas alienated from his family this most tender, home-loving man.* The young idealists of the world left him behind, for they broke out new highways of thought which he could not travel; young Russia sees in him a splendid survival of an elder age of storm and struggle, calls him master but not leader.

He justified in his own life his theoretic individualism, because he was great and strong enough to stand alone. The spirit of irony can

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*As this book goes to press, Madam Tolstoy's "Autobiography" is being published in *The Freeman*. Her views of the great man should be illuminating, especially if she does not try to minimize his defects.

not but deal gently with the sincerest, bravest of men. Yet may she note under the gray garment of humility a mien incorrigibly aristocratic and domineering. The most powerful mind in the world proclaimed self-submersion as the perfect virtue, because it is the most difficult virtue for a daring and vigorous spirit to attain. The foe of privilege, preaching that all men are brothers in love and alike before the Lord as they should be before the law of man, enjoyed a unique privilege—he was almost the only man in Russia who could with impunity say what he thought. He won this right because he was an aristocrat with friends at court and because the Russian government dared not disregard the admiration of the world which had made Tolstoy an international hero. He warned the mighty to walk in the fear of God, but they walked in the fear of Leo Tolstoy.

To remind ourselves of the titles of some of his books and the order in which they appeared, we may divide his work into seven parts. The first part includes military tales and autobiographic sketches: "Sevastopol," "Two Hussars.' "The Raid," "The Cossacks," "Childhood," "Boyhood," "Youth." The second part, beginning in 1861, embraces his experience as school teacher, his discourses on education, school books, and stories for children and peasants.

The third part, from 1864 to 1878, comprises "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina." The fourth part begins with his religious conversion in 1878, and is devoted to theological, ethical and sociological essays: "My Confession," "Union and Translation of the Four Gospels," "My Religion," "What, Then, Must We Do?" The subjects treated in these books he expounds over and over for the rest of his life. Because it is salient from his other work we may say that the "Kreutzer Sonata" (1889) constitutes a fifth part. "What is Art?" and "Resurrection" may be thought of as a sixth part. Then follows the concluding decade of warfare in pamphlets, essays, letters, upon civil and ecclesiastical authority and other powers of darkness.

Any such partition of Tolstoy's work is untrue to its organic continuity, its massive unity. His books are embedded in his life. Though each novel stands alone in self-sustaining integrity, intelligible to all the world, yet each gains in clearness and power for being understood in relation to the mind that produced it. This colossus of solitary protest, rising rough and volcanic above the flats of modern thought, is vaster when seen close to his intellectual base. Viewed from a distance some sides of him, some contours, are blurred and deceptive. No part of his work can be wholly apprehended unless all parts are brought into the range of vision.

On the day of his death he was the most famous man of letters in the world. From the first report of his final illness bulletins flew over the cables in hourly succession. Yet for several weeks after his death, repeated inquiry among the dealers in English and foreign books in Boston (reputed center of culture and high thinking) showed that there never had been much demand for Tolstoy's books, except his novels, and that the momentary rise of interest caused by his death had not disturbed the dust on such books as "What, Then, Must We Do?" and "My Confession."

This seems to indicate that not all the articles and sermons which followed the ultimate news from Russia were grounded upon first-hand knowledge of Tolstoy. The truth is that his opinions have trickled through to us Westerners in diluted streams. He is already a tradition, and it is the habit of tradition to weaken as it spreads, to lose the effect which a drinker at the sources feels in their concentration, in their full and proportioned measure of ingredients. Tolstoy is abroad in the world; he has permeated the thought of the best minds and tinged the currents of our present beliefs. But few Westerners know him in his overwhelming entirety.

This man who laid open his whole mind and heart with prodigal frankness is borne westward on the winds of rumor as a mythical prodigy. The outlines of his thought are misty and wavering to many of those who call him great. He spared no pains to clarify his beliefs; he expounded the same principle many times with undiminished force and ever new transparency; he gave sweeping permission to the world to translate and print his books. Yet there is no complete authorized edition of his works in any language, even in Russian, thanks to the censors and his own indifference to practical concerns.*

Thus for the moment a partial choas has descended upon the work of Tolstoy, a coherent luminous body of work, which left his hand as free from ambiguity as his extraordinary skill and industry could make it, but which has been scattered in transmission. It will take some years for his loyal followers in England and America to give us a complete and adequate translation; and in spite of Matthew Arnold's naive confidence in the French, the most patient collator will have difficulty in finding Tolstoy's work or recognizing even the titles, in the books which the Parisian publishers have sent forth under his name. One who has assembled such of his books as are procurable in French and English would say with all emphasis possible:

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*This is no longer true in the troubled year of grace, 1922. Every scrap of Tolstoy is published in Russia. And probably before long there will be complete translations in many modern languages.

"Withhold judgment about any particular belief expressed or supposed to have been expressed by Tolstoy until you have read as many of his books as you can get—and do not fail to read them." He is the one noble speaker who has happened in our time, "who may be named and stand as the mark and acme" of modern literature.

A little knowledge of Tolstoy is more than proverbially dangerous. He laid his vigorous hand upon every problem that vexes and strengthens the soul. His utterance on each problem is intense and aggressive. He boldly pursues an an idea whither it leads, or drives it with passionate conviction to a foreseen conclusion, and stays not for the beliefs of any majority or minority of men. His magnitude overflows the accepted area of such an adjective as intolerant. Yet approached for the first time by a reader accustomed to the persuasive amenities of other saints and sages, he seems to bristle with outrageous denial; some of his opinions, isolated from the rest, stand as repellant outposts, forbidding many minds which, entering from another side, would go straight to the heart of him. For example, our traditional reverence for

Shakespeare is wounded by his downright statement that Shakespeare was not an artist; the offended judgment retorts that thereby Tolstoy proves that he is himself no artist, or that in crotchety old age he outgrew the poetry of his virile years. It must be understood that the essay on Shakespeare is in the nature of an appendix to his essay, "What Is Art?" That in turn is closely related to his ethical and social teachings. Those again are inseparably bound with his tales and novels. And his fiction, finally, is rooted in Russia life, not only because, as is obvious, it deals with Russian people, but because during Tolstoy's prime, there was, as we shall presently see, an attitude toward the novel and all literary art which was peculiar to intellectual Russians.

Happily for English readers the foundation for complete understanding of Tolstoy has been laid by Mr. Aylmer Maude in his "Life," the second volume of which appeared a few days before his master's death. Mr. Maude has entire knowledge of his subject and perfect sympathy; he is a sane and independent thinker, and his work is admirable for its balance, its candor, its sturdy devotion, which, however, admits no surrender of the biographer's private beliefs. To the reader who cares merely for an interesting story Tolstoy's career offers more than that of most men of letters. It is laid amid the plots and counterplots of bloody Russia, the most melodramatic background of modern history. The man is spectacular, compelling, in all violation of his own doctrines of self-abasement. The peasant's smock, which he wore as symbol of his unity with common man, served only to make him the more picturesque. This ascetic religious philosopher was a master of thrilling war stories. He knew equally well the heart of a lady in the high life of Moscow, and the soul of a peasant woman. He was of athletic stature, and his huge hand was sensitive to the finger tips; with it he gripped a scythe, played the piano, wrote a tirade against modern music, and indited an exposition of the gospel of love which estranged some of his best friends! It is no wonder that his fiction bears the seal of reality, that it has the abundance, the variety, the jostling contrasts of life itself.

II.

In Russia prose fiction has been for a century the vehicle of the soberest reflections upon contemporary problems. It was dangerous for a Russian radical to express his beliefs directly in essays and expositions; what he was not allowed to utter in editorial and parliamentary debate he set forth indirectly through the novel, which thus became a sort of realistic parable. Suppression increased his emotional intensity. Feeling himself a member of a down-trodden class, he became the champion of other down-trodden classes. When Tolstoy began to write, the novel was already a tempered weapon against abuse, the skilful handling of it was a tradition among the literati, and there were masters to coach and encourage the beginner. The Russian novel records the deepest motives of Russian history. Tourgenef voiced the philosophic resignation and scepticism of the educated Russian and the evils of serfdom. Tolstoy portrayed the vices of the educated Russian and the evils of wage-slavery which followed the emancipation of the serfs. Russian fiction is great, because it treats the gravest struggles of life and because its authors have trained themselves in the art of expounding ideas in the form of fiction without transgressing the laws of narrative; they have learned to be the mouthpiece of life and to let life preach the sermons. To Tolstoy and other Russians the greatest American book is "Uncle Tom's Cabin," because it is the chronicle of a bleeding issue; I have seen many references to that book by Russian writers but scarcely a mention of Hawthorne.

Mr. Maude quotes a letter to Tolstoy from

Drouzhinin, critic, novelist, and translator of Shakespeare: "An Englishman or an American," he says, "may laugh at the fact that in Russia not merely men of thirty, but gray-haired owners of 2,000 serfs sweat over stories of a hundred pages, which appear in the magazines, are devoured by everybody, and arouse discussion in society for a whole day. However much artistic quality may have to do with this result, you cannot explain it merely by art. What in other lands is a matter of idle talk and careless dilettantism, with us is quite another affair. Among us things have taken such shape that a story—the most frivolous and insignificant form of literature—becomes one of two things: either it is rubbish, or else it is the voice of a leader sounding through the empire."

Tolstoy's realism is, then, the result both of his own temperamental passion for truth and of a theory of art which prevailed in his literary circle. There were, to be sure, silly novelists in Russia; there, as everywhere, only the best minds regarded fiction as a vital matter. But there were enough such serious minds to welcome Tolstoy and encourage him. Nekrasof, editor of *The Contemporary,* found in Tolstoy's first work, "the truth—the truth, of which, since Gogol's death, so little has remained in Russian literature." Tourgenef repeatedly called Tol-

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stoy the greatest of Russians, and on his deathbed pencilled the pathetic letter in which he pleaded with Tolstoy to return to his art. "I am glad," he said, "to have been your contemporary." Had he lived sixteen years longer, "Resurrection" might have made him happy.

In Tolstoy's discourses on religion appear many times the words "sense of life"—religion is the sense of life, the principle upon which the details of the moral world are ordered and by which they are to be interpreted. In a slightly different meaning "the sense of life" expresses the total effect of Tolstoy's fiction. He wrote to a young disciple: "Do not bend to your purpose the events in the story, but follow them wherever they lead you. . . . Lack of symmetry and the apparent haphazardness of events is a chief sign of life."

In "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina" there are many plots. The unity is that of the loose-jointed English novel rather than that of the French, which travels on a straight track. Tolstoy's stories move like a river with many tributaries; he explores now one, now another of the branch streams, but the course of the main current is continuous, and runs in one general direction, as if the slope of the country had been determined before the recorder came upon the scene to measure and report.

"War and Peace" is greater than a novel; it is an epic, it is nation-wide and long as the growth from childhood to maturity. We see from a peak of the face of eastern Europe and the swarming of peoples and armies. The sensation of vastness, of humanity surging and flowing in obedience to obscure collective interests is produced by only one other modern book that I know, Hardy's "The Dynasts." From the high pinnacles of omniscience the imagination descends by swift unperceived transitions to the intimacies of a house in Moscow—to the heart of the girl Natacha—to the mind of Pierre saturated with alcohol plotting to assassinate Napoleon. The adventures and purposes of the characters cross and conflict, interweave and unite, but each goes as it must and there is no confusion in the telling.

In "Anna Karenina," the story of Levin is but loosely related to the principal tragedy, and the story of Levin's brother is an excursion from the highway of Levin's career. One can see that after the book is done. During its course the reader has no sense that any part is not precisely placed. The illusion of inevitability is perfect. Levin's brother is related to him by natural ties in life; it is natural, then, that he should appear in Levin's story.

The illusion of inevitability springs from Tolstoy's all-encircling comprehension of events, from his justice to each character and from his extraordinary physical vividness. He writes with his five senses. A critic warned him early that he was in danger of making a man's thigh feel like going on a journey to India.

But his recognition of physical sensations and his power to convey them (they traverse bodily the stylistic obstacles of translation) take the story off the flat page and give it three dimensional reality. The acrid smell of an old man's breath, the coldness of a man's hand when he is in mental distress, the cracking of Karenin's knuckles when he clasps his hands in moral satisfaction or the anguish of wounded pride—such details cling to the mind, and the memory of them recalls the whole story.

Tolstoy's conception of human character is at once relentlessly analytic and profoundly pitiful and kind. The whole content of his thought from its bold surface to its deepest depth is instinct with compassion. Once when he was walking with Tourgenef they came to an old broken-down horse in a pasture. Tolstoy went up to it, stroked it, and uttered its thoughts and sufferings with such moving tenderness that Tourgenef cried: "You must once have been a horse yourself."

In "Master and Man," a beautiful story of two men lost in a snowstorm, the horse is a third character—an animal character, be it understood, for Tolstoy is antipodal to nature-faking. He has confidence that nature and man will tell their own story and disclose their inherent lessons. Dogmatic and uncompromising in his private ethical beliefs, he never sacrifices humanity even upon the altars where he tried to immolate himself. Valid morality springs spontaneously from his narrative, and is thereby a hundredfold more impressive than teachings forced from artificially moulded events. Even in his rewriting of traditional myths and parables he restores inorganic sermons to life, creates a living thing in which the ethical intention is assimilated and vitalized. He told these stories to the peasants, listened with delight to their retelling of them, and incorporated their racial turns of phrase. To an old peasant woman with a native gift for narrative, he said: "You are a real master, Anisya; thank you for teaching me to speak Russian and to think Russian."

He learned from life and he trusted life to teach the reader. Anna Karenina commits suicide, not because she is a naughty woman whom the novelist as guardian of morals must punish for the satisfaction of a virtuous world, but because the society that surrounds her, the everyday life of visiting and tea-drinking, inexorably forbids her to be happy. Tolstoy is a champion of the poor, and he began his career at a time when, as Mr. Cahan tells us, "the idealization of the peasant" was one of the staple phrases in essays and editorials. But in Tolstoy's stories there is no false sublimation of the peasant. He does not cry, like Dickens, or the professional charity-monger: "Pity these poor starved brothers." He simply recites their lives. Sometimes he chronicles the most terrible things in a grim restrained matter-of-fact tone, more moving than any passionate appeal to the reader's sympathy. He is, of course, a master of argument and exhortation, but all that is found in his other books, not in his fiction.

A critic, whose democracy is too narrowly partisan, complains that in "War and Peace" all the important characters are aristocrats, and that the story fails to reveal the motives of the people, of those inarticulate millions who Tolstoy himself says are the real makers of history. But this apparent fault is an instance of Tolstoy's integrity. When he wrote "War and Peace" he knew only aristocrats, or was chiefly interested in them.. He had already begun to discern the relations between the multitude and the leaders whom history signalizes; but he had not lived close to peasants and workmen; he had approached them as lord and master, not yet as brother and interpreter. Moreover, if there be a moral hero in "War and Peace" whom the author seems to favor, it is Karataief, the illiterate soldier, whose simple faith dawns as a regenerative light upon Pierre, a rich man of the world who has met all philosophies and found them heartless.

Tolstoy could not write what he did not know or did not feel. His stories, though not autobiographic in the usual sense of the world, are the quintessence of his adventures and experiences, accurately recalled and profoundly meditated. When the manuscript of the "Kreutzer Sonata" was read in his house to a company of friends, Tolstoy said in answer to some objections:

"In a work of art it is indispensable that the artist should have something new, of his own. It is not how it is written that really matters. People will read the 'Kreutzer Sonata' and say, 'Ah, that is the way to write!' The indispensable thing is to go beyond what others have done, to pick off even a very small fresh bit. But it won't do to be like my friend Fet, who at sixteen wrote, 'The spring bubbles, the moon shines, and she loves me,' and who went on writing and writing, and at sixty wrote: 'She loves me, and the spring bubbles, and the moon shines.' "

It was impossible for Tolstoy, the novelist, to write of people whom he did not know, merely because he happened to have sympathy with some of their ideals and habits. It was impossible for him to violate human nature when he portrayed characters that he did know. Hating professional psychology and all other sciences and quasi-sciences, he is the greatest of so-called psychological novelists; his psychology was made before text-books, and it used to be called "truth to human nature." You cannot suggest, as you read a novel by Tolstoy, anything a character ought have done which was not done, any emotion he should have felt which Tolstoy has not suggested at exactly the right moment. He penetrates the characters of living men and the characters of history and romance. The pseudo-psychology of the critics of "Hamlet," does not deceive him. Napoleon, mythical monster and genius unapproachable, fails to over-awe him; Tolstoy draws him, man size, amid events that dwarf heroes.

In "Resurrection," Nekhludof is represented as holding social theories which in point of fact Tolstoy held. Nekhludof reads Henry George and tries to give his land to the peasants as communal property. Tolstoy, the social reformer, would admit no obstacle to the justice and the practicability of the plan; a lesser artist would have yielded to the reformer, the plan would have worked and the story would have proved the theory. But Tolstoy, the novelist, confronts Nekhludof with the suspicion, the ignorant shrewdness of the peasants; the plan encounters all the difficulties, legal and psychological, which life would offer.

"Resurrection" is the crowning proof of Tolstoy's artistic power. For twenty years he had developed theories about every problem of life; he held his opinions tenaciously; hugging them in resolute defiance he strode roughshod through the domains of church, state and family. His convictions were strong enough to silence him as an artist, and for years he obeyed the mandate of conscience that forbade him to write novels at all. But when, to raise money for the Doukhobors, he consented to write "Resurrection," his artistic sense was stronger than the rest of him (if, indeed, there was any antagonism between the two sides of his nature), and theories powerful enough to disrupt the universe were kept in bounds by his sense of proportion, his sense of life.

The feeling that Tolstoy, the artist, and Tolstoy, the reformer, are in any true sense engaged in struggle is largely due to the false dialectic of traditional criticism, which he by precept and practice has confuted. His great moral principles are the sure foundation of his greatness in art. For us Westerners modern realism—Hardy and Zola come first to mind—is associated with a godless though very humane scepticism. Religious sentiment has been left in the weak hands of romance, and the longer it has been left there the more false it has become. From the beginning, even before his religious conversion, Tolstoy had a sound ethical outlook. At the age of forty he wrote of Tourgenef's "Smoke": "The strength of poetry lies in love, and the direction of that strength depends on character. Without strength of love there is no poetry. In 'Smoke' there is hardly any love of anything and very little poetry. There is only love of a light and playful adultery, and therefore the poetry of that novel is repulsive." The spirit in that criticism is the guiding spirit in "Anna Karenina," and it is the same spirit which dictated this passage in the magnificent sermon on the Russian-Japanese war: "The great struggle of our time . . . is not the struggle in which men engage with mines, bombs and bullets; it is the spiritual struggle which goes on incessantly, which is going on now, between the enlightened conscience of humanity, about to be made manifest, and the shadows and oppression which surround it and crush it."

III.

To western liberals Tolstoy's assaults on church and state seem too vehement, partly because the tyranny he attacked is more obviously brutal than that from which we suffer, partly because we are complacently blind to facts which he revealed, facts which are present at our doors. Our mild meliorations delude us. We wave an idle hand and say: "Ah, yes, Russia is a savage country, but we are not like that."* And all the while the coldest labor statistics, if we dared to open them, show that in the exploitation of workmen, women and children, ours is as barbarous a country as any in the world. Our horrors and injustices are smoothed over by a disingenuous press, which is owned or indirectly controlled by the powers that be. American philanthropy steals with one hand and builds universities with the other. We have no kings and no dukes, but America is the sport of capital; it lies abjectly prostrate before a power-drunk bourgeoisie. We celebrate Tolstoy in harmless little magazine articles and wear shirts woven by children. We think we need no school like the one Tolstoy conducted for poor, backward Russian peasants, because we have our public schools and compulsory education laws—in some states. Hundreds of our children are at work; they have succeeded, thanks to the glorious free competition of business, in taking their fathers' places at the machines. The children that are in school wave the flag and read about George Washington.

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*And we are still saying it, 1922!

Tolstoy's teachings can not at present shake the somnolent conscience of America. He believed in his innocence that our industrial masters have reached the outrageous limits of exploitation, and that America must be the first country to rise and throw off its parasites. But that is a foreigner's opinion and not to be taken seriously in the land of the free and the home of the National Civic Federation. His indictment of our civilization is only nine-tenths true, and we shall take advantage of the one-tenth that is overstatement to throw his indictment out of court. He sees that every government is a commercial agency by means of which a privileged minority conducts its business at the expense of the majority. We are ashamed to believe that that can be true of our Congress and our irreproachable Supreme Court. It is easier to dismiss Tolstoy, because he is "eccentric" and "goes too far." Did he not sweepingly assert that there is no such thing as a virtuous statesman? That absurdity permits us to ignore the book in which it appears.

Besides, it is more "optimistic" to read articles about the "history of achievement in the United States," to take democratic short cuts to superficial knowledge, than to read disconcerting books. Our healthy-minded confidence in American morals bids us be content with a little gossip about Carlyle and his wife, and not trouble ourselves with such a difficult book as "Past and Present." In like fashion we shall understand Tolstoy's ideals without reading "What, Then, Must We Do?" or "The Kingdom of Heaven Is Within You." Sufficient for us a few newspaper discussions about "Why Tolstoy Left the Countess and the Relations Between Family Life and Anarchism." For Tolstoy was an anarchist, and that disposes of him! We know all about anarchists; they live in Paterson, N. J., and in the imaginations of journalists, home secretaries, and framers of immigration laws.

Yet despite our republican wisdom, we cannot quite understand Tolstoy until we know the true meanings of such words as labor, capital, exploitation, rent, property, interest, and proletariat. In Russia these words are understood by many people, also in Germany. But we Americans, though highly cultivated, are not well informed about contemporary facts and current philosophies. We have still to be taught that the Russian revolution is our revolution, that it is part of a mighty economic change which is in process all over the world. A study of Tolstoy and his critics will help to instruct us—some day—about these momentous relations.

The present status of the revolution is more confused in Russia than in any other country.* The repressive measures of the government forced a temporary alliance between all types of revolutionaries. It was this alliance which isolated Tolstoy from other reformers and made him a retarding force, almost a reactionary, against the progress of the Social Democracy, that party of orderly Marxians under German tutelage which was the hope of young Russia. The Czar's government, which was no respecter of principles, grouped him with all the malcontents and libertarians. And he returned the compliment. Because he despised all economics, he could not join a "scientific" party. Failing to distinguish between the peaceful and the militant revolutionists, he charged them all with murder and grouped them with the government. And thus he stood alone, distrustful of peaceful anarchists because they were not religious, and distrustful of most re-

*This refers, of course, to the revolution before the Great War. I wonder now, 1922, just what Lenin, Trotsky, Chicherin, et.al., think of Tolstoy, and what he would have thought of them!

ligions because they were organized on a property basis. He stood alone. Yet all liberal men, antithetical to each other as are the socialists and the anarchists, united in loving him as they united in hatred of the government. They applauded his terrific indictment of the society under which we live, though they disagreed from various points of view with his solution. It was said of him on his eightieth birthday that whatever conflict there might be between his beliefs and those of other reformers, the foes of liberty were his foes and the friends of liberty were his friends.

Tolstoy's solution for our ills is Christian anarchy, a voluntary communism allied with the teachings of Jesus, or with Tolstoy's interpretation of them. He taught that all violence is wrong, all government is robbery, and that the only possible moral order is founded on love of man and renunciation of legal rights. That he should have been a champion of Henry Georgeism, a plan that depends on organized government, is one of his many inconsistencies; what drew him to the single-tax theory was probably not so much the economic principles as George's arraignment of landlordism.

It is Tolstoy's own arraignment of our so-called civilization rather than his proposed remedies which will quicken the conscience of the world.* His individualism, his doctrine of private goodness, looks backward and not forward. He is, like Carlyle, the voice of a bygone time.

He had lived through the failures of many political revolutions, and he abhorred anything that pretended to be scientific. He turned his eyes from the science of men to their souls. In his magnificent self he justified his individualism, but were we a billion Tolstoys, saintly and self-disciplined, we must work in organization, or we cannot work effectively. The world is religious, but religion is a matter of opinion. The world is also economic, and economics is not a matter of opinion, but of unavoidable facts over which the individual has little control.** Like Ruskin, Tolstoy rejected economics because most professorial economists do not tell the truth. He blamed the dismal science for the dismal facts and for the inadequacies of its classic expounders. Had he understood the economic structure of society (which nobody *does* understand), he would have seen the futility of trying to abandon his estates. His singular abnegation could not put an end to the evils of landlordism, even to the extent of his own plot of ground. He could not make the burden

*Will it? I am not so confident as I was once.

**That sounds like good sense. Some of Tolstoy's countrymen at Genoa seem to have proved it.

of landless people one ounce lighter by dismounting in his own person from their backs. Nothing can be done until an effective majority of men agree to abolish private ownership of land and establish communal ownership.

Tolstoy preached with splendid fervor the power of the individual soul. But his practice is proof of our impotent severalty. It was disorganization that caused the famine which he labored to relieve, and it was his efficient organization that kept the hungry from starving. That our greatest man of letters should sweat behind a prehistoric plow is good for his soul and for ours; but, even if we should all grow perfect in spirit and eager for our share of manual labor, we should still feed ourselves better by communial use of steam plows. Tolstoy's belated Proudhonism is not the solution for the evils of property. It is his negative teaching that has positive value. He is an abolitionist, not a constructive philosopher. But to say that is not to answer him, not to deny him. He remains unanswered as long as the labor of this world is done at the behest of the few and for their profit. His work is not done, his books cannot be outgrown, until every man of us looks at the facts honestly and cries with him: "It is impossible to live so! It is impossible to live so!"

MAETERLINCK'S ESSAYS

MAETERLINCK'S ESSAYS

If we had to lose one part or the other of Maeterlinck's work, I think we should less reluctantly surrender the plays than the essays. The essays are richer in substance than the dramas and they are as truly poetic. The sunny garden, where the poet lives with his bees and flowers, is a more splendid domain than moonlit psuedo-mediæval empires, peopled with the wraiths of women. And the little bull-pup of the essay is a truer dog than the one in "The Blue Bird."

Some years ago, when the essay on the dog was first published in English, I read it aloud to a woman who owned a Boston terrier, and I gave it to a professional breeder of dogs. Both liked it. It is an essay that any one can understand; it illuminates a ground where all kinds of people meet. Even Bill Sikes would have liked it. Maeterlinck says what almost everybody thinks, and says it as it has not been said before, not in "Rab and His Friends." The simple eloquence, the sincerity, the affectionate humor are the positive virtues of the essay; and its negative virtue is freedom from a kind of rhetorical artificiality in which Maeterlinck indulges when he gets away from the solid realities of life.

Maeterlinck is an amateur botanist and beekeeper and a professional poet. He knows, or seems to know, the facts, and he sees them with an imaginative vision, wondering at them like a child, in the very act of giving quite lucid "scientific" explanations. He hovers often on the enchanted borderland between knowledge and fancy, and plays to and fro between regions which, though adjacent parts of the same universe, have different habits of thought. I am acquainted with an American poet and philosopher who does not know the common kinds of dogs such as any boy of ten knows. I also knew and argued with an eminent biologist who objected to Maeterlinck's "Life of the Bee," on the ground that the poetic phrasing falsified the facts. True, he conceded, the queen-bee does fly and the strongest male overtakes and fertilizes her. But for Maeterlinck to poetize the fact as a "nuptial flight" seemed to the man of science not only untruth to nature, but a blasphemy against the sacred love of man and woman.

My friend, the biologist, and my acquaintance, the American poet and philosopher, both seem to be unfortunately incomplete human beings. The poet and philosopher does not know what any duffer knows, what anybody who cares not only for animals but for ordinary folks that own dogs cannot refrain from knowing. He is a man of cosmopolitan experience and has surely been in the *Bois* more than once. In the Garden of Acclimatation is a wonderful kennel; there are at least fifteen kinds of dogs, each with his specific or sub-specific name hung on his cage. If you had never seen a dog you could not walk about that kennel five minutes without learning the names of a half-dozen varieties (and without discovering in yourself a highly moral desire to steal one or two of those beautifully kept beasts). Some ignorance is unpardonable, and some philosophy and some poetry would be more vital for a little plain back-yard knowledge. On the other hand, what a pity it is that any man's sense of fact should be so strait as to forbid entrance to his soul of a honey bee which Maeterlinck sends forth equipped with these georgeous unentomological wings of words: "The yellow fairies of the honey." It's as bad as a democrat who should object to the phrase "queen-bee."

Maeterlinck has knowledge of nature, not only such knowledge as Wordsworth had, but a fair acquaintance with contemporaneous science. He has learned lessons from Fabre, whom he admires. He has studied his own garden in the light of what botanists have told him and in the other light, which is not hostile to botany, but is different, the light of poetry. He loves to speculate about unsettled questions. And his speculations have a very great intellectual merit. He is, on the whole, content to be uncertain about uncertain things and to express his inclinations toward one or another conclusion in a persuasive, wistful manner. Like many other poets, he leans toward the belief that nature, which includes us, knows more than we do, and that to ascribe intelligence, in a restricting way, to man alone is probably to leave out a good deal of the magic of growing things, and to omit some potential explanations of their mystery, their mystery in the poet's sense and in the stern truth seeker's sense. The essay on "The Intelligence of Flowers" revivifies the old moot question about what knowledge is, what instinct is. It's a very fine question, and it becomes hottest when the men of imagination and the men of science (happily they are not mutually exclusive) argue about whether a dog knows that he loves you. A British poet began a verse to a dog:

The curate says you have no soul—
I know that he has none.

That is good; but it is spiteful. Let us admit the curate. For the dog would. A dog does not care a wag of his tail whether a man is curate or editor of a newspaper. Therein the dog is our superior.

Maeterlinck, though overtaken by the wan doubt of our times, is a true believer in other kinds of intelligence than ours. He holds that "nature, when she wishes to be beautiful, to please, to delight and to prove herself happy, does almost what we should do had we her treasures at our disposal." There, you see, he begs the whole question and ascribes to "nature" wishes, desires, intentions. He does the trick that poets always do; he answers the question that he asks and that he pretends to be discussing. "All that we observe within ourselves," he says, "is rightly open to suspicion; we are at once litigant and judge, and we have too great an interest in peopling our world with magnificent illusions and hopes. But let the least external indication be dear and precious to us."

In this the poet says all, while, on another page, the man of science, with firm integrity, minimizes evidence and refuses to be convinced. There is a region where the poet knows almost everything worth knowing. There is a region where the man of science knows, not everything worth knowing, but all that is known. There is a misty mid-region where a full-minded, large-hearted man can live happily. He gets the message going and coming. He receives what the poet has to say and what the man of fact has to say and he constructs his world from the fragmentary contributions of both regions. Maeterlinck himself in "Our Eternity," dwells on this central ground. Shakespeare and Isaiah are on his right hand. On his left hand are William James and other psychological students of the evidence of spooks.

Poets are enamored of death. Nine-tenths of all the imaginative literature of the world is concerned with love and death, the begetter and the extinguisher. The sweetest lines in Shakespeare deal with love; the stateliest lines, Hamlet's and Macbeth's, are upon death. The chief interest of life is in dying. We get our highest emotions from some other person's death, and we adapt our entire course, from the cradle to the grave, with a view to the fact that we are going to quit in some year determined by fate or God or other power not quite understood, a year carefully figured out by the actuaries of the life insurance companies.

Man is a perfect coward in the face of death, his own or that of somebody he loves. The believer and the unbeliever alike bewail the great adventure. The tears shed by the believer in immortality and by the disbeliever are the same hot, saline, human drops. Everybody wants an answer, and only the adherents of certain sects receive an answer that satisfies them. Those answers do not satisfy me or you, not because there is anything wrong in the answers, but because the people that hold the answers behave as all the rest of us do in the presence of death. Maeterlinck, on the basis of modern evidence, argues for two-hundred and fifty-eight pages that we do not know what happens when we die. "In any case, I would not wish my worst enemy, were his understanding a thousand-fold loftier and a thousand-fold mightier than mine, to be condemned eternally to inhabit a world of which he had surprised an essential secret and of which, as a man, he had begun to grasp an atom."

Amen! That leaves us where we started. But the fact, the cold, interesting, magnificent fact, is that we are alive, and some of us are working and some are playing. Maeterlinck is a great child playing with flowers and with words. He is also a competent workman, and he is assisted by another skilful craftsman to whom English readers owe much, Mr. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, who translates Maeterlinck into English. He is a fine artist. Following faithfully the run of our English idiom, he succeeds in keeping for our Anglo-Saxon eyes and ears the color, tone, or whatever it is, of Maeterlinck's beautiful style.

JOSEPH CONRAD

JOSEPH CONRAD

To the newest generation of adult readers the dawn of a literary light is a rare experience. It is as if the courses of our literature were Arctic in their slowness, as if the day came at long intervals, and then without warmth or brilliance. Our fathers knew the joy of welcoming the latest novel of Dickens or a new volume of essays by Carlyle. The only* great day whose beginning young men have witnessed is the day of Kipling; his light mounted rapidly to a high noon, and if the afternoon shadows have begun to deepen prematurely, that sun is still beautiful and strong. Other lights have kindled in the last fifteen years, and have gone out before they had fairly dislodged the darkness, or have continued to burn dimly.

Eyes accustomed only to darkness and uncertain lights are in condition to be deluded by the phantoms of false dawn; it is therefore unwise to greet with too much enthusiasm the arrival of Mr. Joseph Conrad. Even if the dawn is real, it is certainly overcast with heavy clouds, and it has not proved bright enough to startle the world. Nevertheless, his light is of unique beauty in contemporary literature, and the story of its kindling makes interesting biography.

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*I ask the reader to remember that this was written in 1906.

Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski was born fifty years ago in Poland. His father, a critic and poet, and his mother, who was exiled to Siberia, were engaged in revolutionary journalism. At nineteen Conrad left home, to escape an unsettled life, and also, it is fair to assume, to satisfy his love of adventure. He found work on English vessels, and this fact gave to contemporary English letters a man who might otherwise have written in French. To-day he appears in handbooks of biography as Master in the British Merchant Service, and Author. At nineteen he had not mastered English; at thirty-eight he had published no book. Since then he has published about a volume a year. In preparation for his books he sailed as able seaman, mate, and master, for twenty years, on steam and sailing craft, and meanwhile he was reading deep in French and English literature,—all, we are told, with no intent to become a writer. Indeed it was a period of ill health resulting in an enforced idleness from the familiar sea that gave him opportunity to put some of his adventures into words. Perhaps he is a lesser illustration of a theory of Thoreau's that a word well said "must have taken the place of a deed by some urgent necessity, even by some misfortune, so that the truest writer will be some captive knight, after all." However that may be, the intellectual and physical adventures of Conrad's life were abundant, and they reappear, discernible though transfigured, in the substance and the qualities of his work.

His ten books are for the most part concerned with the waters of the earth, and the men that sail on the face of the waters, and with lands, far from English readers, to be reached only by long journeying in ships.* His first book, "Almayer's Folly," tells the story of a disappointed Dutch trader in Borneo, whose half-caste daughter runs away with a Malay chief. His second book, "An Outcast of the Islands," deals further with the career of Almayer and with that of another exiled Dutchman. "Nostromo," has for its scene an imaginary South Amer-

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*Almayer's Folly. The Macmillan Co. 1895.
An Outcast of the Islands. Tauchnitz. 1896.
The Nigger of the Narcissus (Children of the Sea). Dodd, Mead & Co. 1897.
Tales of Unrest. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1898.
Lord Jim. McClure, Phillips & Co. 1899.
The Inheritors (with F. M. Hueffer). McClure, Phillips & Co. 1901.
Typhoon. G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1902.
Falk. McClure, Phillips & Co. 1903.
Youth. McClure, Phillips & Co. 1903.
Romance (with F. M. Hueffer). McClure, Phillips & Co. 1904.
Nostromo. Harper & Brothers. 1904.

ican state, and its heroes are an Englishman and an Italian. "The Nigger of the Narcissus" (published in America as "The Children of the Sea") and "Typhoon" are each the chronicle of a voyage. "Lord Jim" is the story of a young mate who disgraces himself by one unseamanlike act, and becomes a wanderer in the eastern islands, and finally a kind of king in a village of savages. "Tales of Unrest" contains five stories, two of which are about Malays, and another about white traders in an African station. The hero of "Falk"—the title story of a volume of three pieces—is a Scandinavian sailor who has been a cannibal, and who wins the daughter of a German ship captain in an Eastern port. "Youth," the first story in a volume of three, is the memory of a young mate's voyage in an unseaworthy ship, which burns and leaves the crew to seek an Eastern seaport in the boats. The second story, "The Heart of Darkness," is an account of a journey into the Belgian Congo State and a curious study of the effect of solitude and the jungle and savagery on a white trader. The third piece in the volume is the story of a ship-captain who steers his ship with the help of a Malay servant and lets no one guess until the end that he is blind. Of two books written in collaboration with Mr. Ford M. Hueffer, the only one worth considering, "Romance," comes the nearest to being the kind of fiction that the advertisements announce as "full of heart interest, love, and the glamor of a charming hero and heroine." It begins with a smuggler's escapade in England, and ends in an elopement in the West Indies; the best parts, probably Mr. Conrad's share in the work, are those about the sea and all that on it is, fogs, ships, and bearded pirates. In these books are men and women of all civilized nations, the acquaintance of a globe-trotter, and there are, besides, enough Malays, Chinamen, and Negroes to make the choruses of several comic operas. But in Conrad they are serious people, every Malay with a soul and a tragedy; even the Nigger of the Narcissus is equipped with psychological machinery.

Conrad's subject-matter, the secretion of experience, is rich enough and of sufficiently strange and romantic quality to endow a writer of popular fiction; and his style,—that is, the use of words for their melody, power, and charm,—is fit for a king of literature. Stevenson, who found so little sheer good writing among his contemporaries, would have welcomed Conrad and have lamented that he could not or would not tell his stories in more brief, steady, and continuous fashion.

For there is the rub. Conrad is not instinctively a story-teller. Many a writer of less genius surpasses him in method. He has no gift of what Lamb calls a bare narrative.

There are writers with magnificent power of language who do not attain that combination of literary and human qualities which is readableness, and there are others who interest many people in many generations, and yet do not write well. To most readers Dickens is as delightful when he writes slovenly sentences as when he writes at his best. Scott, the demigod, pours out his great romances in an inexpressive fluid. On the other hand, Walter Pater writes infallibly well. These illustrations are intended to suggest a difference which is a fact in literature, and are not to be carried to any conclusive comparison. The difference exists and it is not a strange fact. It is strange, however, that Conrad, who spins yarns about the sea, master of a kind of subject-matter that would make his books as popular as "Robinson Crusoe" and "Treasure Island," should be one of those who can write but cannot make an inevitably attractive and winning book for the multitude.

Either he knows his fault and can not help it, or he wills it and does not consider it a fault. There is evidence on this question. Several of his stories are put in the mouth of Marlow, an eloquent, reflective, world-worn man. In one place Conrad says, "We knew that we were fated, before the ebb began to run, to hear about one of Marlow's *inconclusive* experiences." The story Marlow tells is no more inconclusive and rambling than most of the other stories, so that one is forced to conclude that Marlow's character as narrator is Conrad's concession to his own self-observed habit of mind. In another place Conrad says: "The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside a kernel, but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine." Evidently Conrad prefers or pretends to prefer the haze to the kernel.

In an essay on Henry James he openly scorns the methods usual to fiction of "solution by rewards and punishments, by crowned love, by fortune, by a broken leg or sudden death," and says: "Why the reading public, which as a body has never laid upon the story-teller the command to be an artist, should demand from him this sham of divine omnipotence is utterly incomprehensible." Thus Mr. Conrad flings down the gauntlet to those demands of readers which greater men than he and Mr. James have been happy to satisfy without sacrifice of wisdom and reality.

A further announcement of his literary creed he made in a kind of artistic confession published a few years ago. "His (the prose writer's) answer to those who in the fulness of a wisdom which looks for immediate profit, demand specifically to be edified, consoled, amused, who demand to be promptly improved or encouraged, or frightened, or shocked, or charmed, must run thus: 'My task which I am trying to achieve is by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is before all to make you see. . . . If I succeed, you shall find there, according to your deserts, encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand; perhaps also that glimpse of truth* for which you have forgotten to ask."

A writer with ideals so high and strongly felt commits himself for trial by exacting standards. It is necessary to remind Mr. Conrad that if a reader is to feel, he must first understand; if he is to hear, he must hear distinctly; and if he is to see, his eye must be drawn by interest in the object, and it can look only in one direction at once. "Nostromo" is told forward and backward in the first half of the book, and the preliminary history of the silver mine is out of all proportion to the story of Nostromo, the alleged hero of the book. "Lord Jim" is confused.* The first few chapters are narrated in the third person by the author. Then for three hundred pages Marlow, a more or less intimate spectator of Jim's career, tells the story as an after-dinner yarn. It would have taken three evenings for Marlow to get through the talk, and that talk in print involves quotation within quotation beyond the legitimate uses of punctuation marks. In other stories the point of view fails. In "The Nigger of the Narcissus" are conferences between two people in private which no third person could overhear, yet the narrative seems to be told in the first person by one of the crew. In "Typhoon," where a steamer with deck almost vertical is plunging through a storm, we are on the bridge beside the simple dogged captain while he shouts orders down to the engine-room through the tube. Without warning we are down in the engine-room, hearing the captain's voice from above, and as suddenly we are back on the bridge again. A man crawls across the deck in a tempest so black that he cannot see whose legs he is groping at. We are immediately informed that he is a man of fifty, with coarse hair, of immense strength, with great lumpy hands, a hoarse voice, easy-going and good-natured,—as if the man were visible at all, except as a blot in the darkness!

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*These Slavs (see above on Tolstoy) are all for Truth, but they are not Chadbandians. They are artists. And so was the Anglo-Saxon who made Chadband.

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*No, it is not. It is clear as daylight.

Conrad has a mania for description. When anything is mentioned in the course of narrative, though it be a thousand miles from the present scene, it must be described. Each description creates a new scene, and when descriptions of different and separated places appear on the same page, the illusion of events happening before the eye is destroyed. If a writer is to transport us instantaneously from one quarter of the globe to another he should at least apprise us that we are on the magic rug, and even then the space-o'erleaping imagination resents being bundled off on hurried and inconsequential journeys. Often when Conrad's descriptions are logically in course, they are too long; the current of narrative vanishes under a mountain (a mountain of gold, perhaps, but difficult to the feet of him who would follow the stream); and when the subterranean river emerges again, it is frequently obstructed by inopportune, though subtle, exposition.

Conrad's propensity for exposition is allied, no doubt, with his admiration for Mr. Henry

James, of whom he has written an extremely "literary" appreciation. Too much interest in masters like Flaubert and Mr. James is not gentlemanly in a sailor, and it cannot help a sailor turned writer, who pilots a ship through a magnificent struggle with a typhoon, leads us into the bewitching terror of the African jungle, and guides us to Malay lands where the days are full of savage love, intrigue, suicide, murder, piracy, and all forms of picturesque and terrific death. Mr. Conrad finds that there are "adventures in which only choice souls are involved, and Mr. James records them with a fearless and insistent fidelity to the *péripéties* of the contest and the feelings of the combatants." That is true and fine, no doubt, but the price which Mr. Conrad pays for his ability to discover it is the fact that hundreds of thousands of readers of good masculine romance are not reading "Lord Jim," or finding new "Youth" in a young mate's wondrous vision of the East, or welcoming a new hero in Captain Whalley. A man who can conceive the mournful tale of Karain and the fight between the half crazy white men at an African trading post has a kind of adventure better, as adventure, than the experiences of Mr. James's choice souls. Stevenson knew all about Mr. James and his "péripéties," but he could stow that knowledge on one side of his head, and from the other side spin "Treasure Island" and "The Wrecker". "The Sacred Fount" never could have befuddled the chronicle of the amiable John Silver, but in Mr. Conrad's "An Outcast of the Islands," where it seems to be a question which white man will kill the other, after a dramatic meet-in the presence of a Malay heroine, each man stands still before our eyes and radiates states of mind.

The lover who finds fault with his sweetheart because he is so proud of her is perfectly human and also perfectly logical. So my reason for dwelling on Mr. Conrad's shortcomings is because his books are thoroughly worth consideration. His advent is really important. More than any other new writer he is master of the ancient eloquence of English style; no one since Stevenson has surpassed in fiction the cadence and distinction of his prose. Never has an English sailor written so beautifully, never has artist had such full and authoritative knowledge of the sea, not even Pierre Loti. Stevenson and Kipling are but observant landsmen after all. Marryat and Clark Russell never write well, though they tell absorbing tales. There was promise in Jack London, but he was not a seaman at heart. Herman Melville's eccentric genius, greater than any of these, never led him to construct a work of art, for all his amazing power of thought and language. Conrad stands alone with his two gifts of sea experience and cultivation of style. He has lived on the sea, loved it, fought it, believed in it, been baffled by it, body and mind. To know its ways, to be master of the science of its winds and waves and the ships that brave it, to have seen men and events and the lands and waters of the earth with the eye of a sailor, the heart of a poet, the mind of a psychologist—artist and ship-captain in one—here is a combination through which Fate has conspired to produce a new writer about the most wonderful of all things, the sea and the mysterious lands beyond it.

If we grant that he is not master of the larger units of style, that is, of construction, we can assert that in the lesser units, sentence for sentence, he is a master of the English tongue. There is a story that he learned English first from the Bible, and his vigorous primal usages of words, his racial idioms and ancient rich metaphors warrant the idea that he came to us along the old highway of English speech and thought, the King James version. His sentences, however, are not biblical as Stevenson's and Kipling's often are, but show a modern sophistication and intellectual deliberateness. He frequently reminds us that he is a Slav who learned French along with his native tongue, that he has read Flaubert and Maupassant and Henry James. Approaching our language as an adult foreigner, he goes deep to the derivative meanings of words, their powerful first intentions, which familiarity has disguised from most of us native-born to English. He has achieved that ring and fluency which he has declared should be the artist's aim. Conrad's prose lifts to passages of great poetic beauty, in which the color of the sea, its emotional aspects, its desolation and its blitheness, are mingled with its meaning for the men who sail it, its "austere servitude," its friendliness and its treachery.

"The ship, a fragment detached from the earth, went on lonely and swift like a small planet. Round her the abysses of sky and sea met in an unattainable frontier. A great circular solitude moved with her, ever changing and ever the same, always monotonous and always imposing. Now and then another wandering white speck, burdened with life, appeared far off,—disappeared, intent on its own destiny. . . . The august loneliness of her path lent dignity to the sordid inspiration of her pilgrimage. She drove foaming to the southward, as if guided by the courage of a high endeavor. The smiling greatness of the sea dwarfed the extent of time."

No fairer temptation can be offered to a reader who does not know Conrad than to quote a passage from the end of "Youth," and no more honest praise can be offered to Conrad than to say that it is a selected, but by no means unique, specimen of his genius.

A crew that have left a burning ship in boats find an Eastern port at night. The weary men tie to the jetty and go to sleep. This is the young mate's narrative years after, the narrative of the reflective and eloquent Marlow: "I was lying in a flood of light, and the sky had never looked so far, so high, before. I opened my eyes and lay without moving. And then I saw the men of the East—they were looking at me. The whole length of the jetty was full of people. I saw brown, bronze, yellow faces, the black eyes, the glitter, the color of an Eastern crowd. And all these beings stared without a murmur, without a sigh, without a movement. They stared down at the boats, at the sleeping men who at night had come to them from the sea. Nothing moved. The fronds of palms stood still against the sky. Not a branch stirred along the shore, and the brown roofs of hidden houses peeped through the green foliage, through the big leaves that hung shining and still like leaves forged of heavy metal. This was the East of the navigators, so old, so mysterious, resplendent and somber, living and unchanged, full of danger and promise. . . . I have known its fascinations since: I have seen the mysterious shores, the still water, the lands of brown nations, where a stealthy Nemesis lies in wait, pursues, overtakes so many of the conquering race, who are proud of their wisdom, of their knowledge, of their strength. But for me all the East is contained in that vision of my youth. It is all in that moment when I opened my young eyes on it. I came upon it from a tussle with the sea—and I was young—and I saw it looking at me. And this is all that it left of it! Only a moment of strength, of romance, of glamour, of youth!"

A CONRAD MISCELLANY

A CONRAD MISCELLANY.

NOTHING that Joseph Conrad writes is negligible; he is one of few living writers whom we must have complete to the last, or the latest, published word. Readers who care only for the yarn-spinner will not find much in his volume of essays, "Notes on Life and Letters," but even they will find something. And for those to whom Conrad is more than a story teller, an incomparable magician, these small bits from his laboratory will have much of the charm of the larger pieces, if only the reminiscent charm that brings any book of his, the least read or read longest ago, swiftly to the surface of memory. If a mere landlubber may hazard the similitude, the captain will always show his qualities whether he is on the bridge of a liner or in a rowboat.

The essays on books are unpretentious notes —eight pages on Henry James, seven on Maupassant, twelve on Anatole France, short excursions in criticism made between the longer voyages to the islands of the blessed. Like most criticism written by men of genius, these papers are interesting for what they say about another man of genius and also for what they say about the critic. One of the most satisfactory essays in what it reveals of Conrad is least satisfactory as objective criticism—the one about Marryat and Cooper, in which there is a declaration of descent in terms of surrender. To be sure, since the elder men are seamen and writers of the sea, Conrad's delight in them is understandable and not to be denied. But there are some things that must be denied even by a critic who gets seasick a mile off shore. One is Conrad's reiterated judgment that the greatness of Marryat "is undeniable." If Marryat is great, then so is Oliver Optic. And when Conrad speaks of the "sureness and felicity of effect" of the prose of Cooper—Cooper, whose style grates on the ear and who drags us by the sheer power of his story through his verbal infelicities—then I jump overboard and leave these literary sailors to fight it out.

When we get back on land to another of Conrad's masters, Guy de Maupassant, I feel less shaky. In "Tales of Unrest" are two stories, "The Return" and "The Idiots," in which I long ago thought I discovered the right kind of influence from the French master—what Conrad praises as Maupassant's austere fidelity to fact. Yet one is puzzled by the implied praise in the very dubious statement that "this creative artist [Maupassant] has the true imagination; he never condescends to invent anything." Just what does that means? If "A Piece of String" and "The Necklace" are not diabolically ingenious inventions, then the word invention means nothing as applied to fiction. In point of invention how far apart are the story of the girls in "La Maison Tellier" and the story of the girl in the pathetic troupe in "Victory"? Both stories are equally invented, equally true to nature, equally free from "the miserable vanity of a catching phrase." But what is a catching phrase? I suppose that a Frenchman gets somewhat the same shiver of delight from fine rhythms in Maupassant's prose that we get from fine rhythms in Conrad. Both men—I could quote many examples—strike out amazing metaphors, the poetry of prose, which are not decorations hung on the outside but are the unremovable intestines of their story. Such metaphors in rhythm are surely "catching phrases," but they are not miserable vanities. I wonder if Conrad has a moment now and then when he distrusts his own eloquence—an eloquence which has brought against him from more than one critic the charge of being a phrase maker.

Conrad's prose is not so hard and compact as Maupassant's, and except the two short stories

I have mentioned I recall nothing in Conrad which in manner or substance obviously illustrates his own statement that he has been "inspired by a long and intimate acquaintance with the work" of Maupassant. His greatest short stories, "Youth" and "The Heart of Darkness," seem worlds away from the French master. But inspiration, the influence of one artist on another, does not mean imitation in method or any visible resemblance in effect. It may mean a fundamental similarity in artistic attitude. The elements of similarity between the French writer and the British are the plain virtues, honesty and courage, which Conrad rightly ascribes to Maupassant; for these are the central virtues in the creed which Conrad announced many years ago and to which he has loyally adhered in the remotest strange seas of romance.

Another of Conrad's masters, acknowledged in the phrase "twenty years of attentive acquaintance" (and the phrase was written in 1905) is Henry James. This seems a curious discipleship if we consider only the material: James static, land-bound, class-bound; Conrad adventurous, errant, familiar with all breeds and degrees of men. But much the same thing happens to both kinds of material. For in the first place the material is not essentially different; it is the history of a two-legged animal staggering on land or aboard ship. And in the second place what happens is simply (though it is not so simple) that an artist tries to put this animal steady on its feet and make it give a reasonable account of itself—through himself. It gets transmitted through an intelligence, a personality, a style, into something more interesting than the actual poor creature who wabbles along the street or on the deck of a steamer. The courageous interpreters make their fellow men stand up, and the real hero of a romance is the romancer.

This is one of the paradoxes of fiction which the mere reader of fiction and of criticism written by masters of fiction can enjoy, that the modern self-conscious story tellers, forever proclaiming their devotion to an objective reality, to the naked fact, and even, like Conrad, pretending scorn of the phrase, are wilful persons who distort life into a new reality. There is something almost naïve in the honest belief of Tolstoy, James, Conrad, that nature, human nature, is something outside the artist, lying *over there,* and that the artist standing *over here* observes it, renders it, "mirrors" it. James himself, a most sophisticated realist, was not always so insistent as Conrad seems to think on the function of the novelist as historian; some years later than Conrad's essay, James found fault with the younger novelists because their work was too undigested, because it was not sufficiently remade, transformed by an individual interpreter—that is, though he did not say it so harshly, the younger men were not interesting individuals, not men of first-rate imagination.

But we must not get too far away from Conrad and his particular relation to James. He has a generously envious admiration for James's inconclusiveness, for the novel that stops but does not end because life does not end; it seems to be, like his admiration for Maupassant's accuracy and directness, a declaration of something that he has striven for and not always accomplished. Conrad winds his own stories up pretty sharply, wipes out his people with annihilation more desolating than the conventional piling of corpses at the end of "Romeo and Juliet" or "Hamlet." Recall the obliterating finality of "Lord Jim," of "Victory," which ends with the blank word "nothing." Or, where death does not conclude it all but the character lives on, remember the abrupt inevitable termination of "The Rescue": "Steer north!" Another relation which I have suggested and which Conrad as critic does not hint is this: Conrad's material, though superficially it is made up of adventure, wreck, blood, piracy, mystery, and Stevensonian yo-heave-ho, is, as he treats it, often as static as anything in James; it is stationary, concerned with the moods of men, analytic, psychological (that tiresome word has to do for it), even while the storm rages; and this is one of the reasons why readers with a taste for ripping yarns have not welcomed him with the unanimous popularity which they accorded to Stevenson and Kipling, to name fine artists and not, of course, to mention cheap favorites. If we really understood Conrad's fiction we have no difficulty in understanding his filial relation to Henry James. Begin with the paragraph on page 13 of "Notes on Life and Letters:" "Action in its essence, the creative art of the writer of fiction," etc., and see if the rest that follows is not, with a change or two, as good an account of Joseph Conrad as of Henry James —better, indeed, since one master of fiction writing of another speaks with two voices or with a voice proceeding from a two-fold authority and wisdom.

Joseph Conrad, novelist, child of English and Continental literature, is not more unaccountable than any other literary genius. But how to explain, or even remember at all, that the head of living English men of letters, next to Hardy, is a Pole named Korzeniowski? It is fair to remember that and be inquisitive about it because in "Notes on Life and Letters" he pretends to write autobiography, and reminds us of his origin in a paper called "Poland Revisited." It is a baffling narrative, even more baffling than the vague book which he chose to call "A Personal Record." Conrad in quest of his youth never gets back to Poland at all except as a British tourist. The paper consists of thirty-two pages. Mr. Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski reaches Cracow on the twenty-fourth page. There are two or three pages of reminiscence, chiefly about his father's death. Then war is declared (this is in 1914), and the British subject, with the assistance of the American Ambassador, escapes from Poland and amid the booming of distant guns in Flanders sails safely back through the Downs "thick with the memories of my sea-life."

Mr. Conrad is the least patriotic of Poles and the most patriotic of Englishmen. His political opinions, which he was evidently invited to express by some English editor who remembered the fading fact of Korzeniowski and appreciated the luminous fact of Joseph Conrad, the writer, are no better and no worse than any competent journalist might have delivered. His hatred of Russia, expressed long before his adopted country became the ally of the Czar, may have its origin in some boyhood bitterness.

But it is an Englishman who speaks, not a Pole. His prophecy of the downfall of Russian autocracy and of the menace of Prussianism shoots into the future with as true an aim as any man could have had in 1905, and a prophet is to be excused for having said at that time that there was in Russia "no ground ready for a revolution." "Conrad political" is less interesting than "Conrad controversial," since his controversial utterances were provoked by the sinking of the Titanic, the question of the safety of ships, and the stupidity of marine officials on land, subjects which he can discuss with the cool knowledge of the expert and the vehemence of an offended master of ships and words.

But the true men of the four into which in his preface he divides himself are "Conrad literary" and "Conrad reminiscent." The reminiscence is not of a dimly, even indifferently, remembered Poland, but of England and the sea. On the twenty-four-page journey to the five-page sojourn in Cracow what happens? London, flashed on you in a few sentences with an original vividness as if Englishmen had never described it before, realized in brief transit, an immense solid thing, compared to which Cracow is an insubstantial dream. He cannot recapture his boyhood, but he gives you instantly the London of to-day and the London of his youth when the British-Polish apprentice was looking for a berth. And then the voyage across the North Sea. Here we are at home. "The same old thing," he says. "A grey-green expanse of smudgy waters grinning angrily at one with white foam-ridges, and over all a cheerless, unglowing canopy, apparently made of wet blotting paper."

"The same old thing!" The sea is the same old thing, water deep and shoal, storm and calm, fog and clear weather, light and darkness, starshine and sunshine. It is understandable that from time to time a new poet should be born, Byron, Tennyson, Swinburne, Whitman, Conrad, Masefield, who, being a different man from all the rest, should phrase some mood of the sea in words that no other poet in centuries had used. But Conrad has written fifteen volumes mostly about the sea, many pages necessarily about some aspect which he has treated more than once. His treatment is so unmistakably his own that you could recognize any passage as his if you saw it on a piece of torn paper blown from nowhere. Yet it is truer of him than of Shakespeare that he never repeats, has no *clichés,* no pet phrases, but in each book finds astonishing new images, as if he himself had not written before. How does he do it?

STRINDBERG

STRINDBERG

SOME men of genius at forty or fifty arrive at a view of life, an attitude toward the human comedy, as inclusive and definite as it is possible for them to conceive. Hardy at seventy is quite recognizable the man that he was at forty. The Meredith of 1860 is the Meredith of 1890. They grow, they improve or change their artistic methods. But their natures do not undergo violent revolutions. Other men, Tolstoy for example, experience a catastrophic annihilation of some part of themselves and emerge from the confusion, remade, fired with new beliefs. Tolstoy had one great battle with himself which divided his life into two main periods, and after the struggle his philosophy, whatever its worth, was fairly settled, and he knew how to express it clearly over and over again.

Strindberg seems to have been continuously at war with Strindberg; and the peace that he found was but the death-bed repentance of a man whose forces were spent. He went through many phases. "The Growth of a Soul", which is autobiographical, might better be called "The Conflicts of a Soul". It seethes with ideas, ends in a half-formed philosophy, and is only a section of Strindberg's intellectual adventures. He was ten men at ten different times, and he was ten men all the time. He expressed every aspect of himself. His manifold genius was master of all forms of literature. As Emerson said of Swedenborg, in whom Strindberg found all the light that his dark soul ever knew, he lies abroad on his times, leviathan-like. Undoubtedly to know him, one must know him entire, and I do not pretend to complete knowledge of his life and works.

Some fragments of his total artistic expression are not intelligible when they are read apart from his other books. "The Inferno" is a confused and murky nightmare which takes on form and purpose only when the light of biography is turned on it. Other works of Strindberg, read by themselves, are clear and shapely.

"By the Open Sea" is an intensely powerful study of an overcultivated man and a primitively passionate woman. It is, moreover, the work of a poet who loves the sea. The passage in which the ichthyologist observes through his telescope the wonder-world beneath the surface of the water is rich with the essential poetry of natural fact. The translator, Ellie Schleussner, would probably say, as Strindberg's admirers all say, that his resonant poetic prose cannot be rendered in another language. Yet the things that he sees in nature and his interpretations of them are in their naked substance the imaginative stuff which is poetry. This Titan was not content to be poet, novelist, dramatist, essayist, philosopher. He was also a man of science, no mean rival, they say, of the professional student of biology and chemistry. The eye that looks through Borg's telescope has been trained in a laboratory and can also roll with a fine frenzy:

"The blenny, which has developed a pair of oars in front, but is too heavy in the stern and reminds one of first attempts at boat building, raised its architectural stone head, adorned with the moustachios of a Croat, above the heraldic foliage among which it had lain, and lifted itself for a short moment out of the mud only to sink back into it the next instant.

"The lump-fish with its seven backs stuck up its keel; the whole fish was nothing but an enormous nose, scenting out food and females; it illuminated for a second the bluish-green water with its rosy belly, surrounding itself with a faint aureole in the deep darkness; but before long its sucker again held safely to a stone, there to wait the lapse of the million years which shall bring delivery to the laggards on the endless road of evolution."

Strindberg has been called both misogamist and misogynist. Yet it is not possible to collect and compress within the bounds of such definite words a man whose ideas on any one subject fly far apart as the poles. If he sometimes, often, expresses virulent detestation of women and all their ways, he is not more tender toward men. He is not a caresser of life. He hangs the whole human race. But he analyzes; tries it before the twelve-minded jury in himself before he pronounces sentence. Point by point, detail for detail, he is just in perception of character and motive. His final view is simply not final, but contradictory as life itself. He thinks that woman is a snare to the feet of a man who would walk upright and accomplish something in the world. Yet he believes in the freedom of woman, would give her the vote, and emancipate her from economic bondage to the man. He even champions the liberty of the child, condemns "the family as a social institution which does not permit the child to become an individual at the proper time," and draws both parents as victims of "the same unfortunate conditions which are honored by the sacred name of law."

"Marriage" contains twenty short stories of married life, so many variations of Strindberg's thesis against the institution. So regarded, the book leaves one rather sore than enlightened.

But these stories are stories, not tracts. Strindberg is a great, if rough and savage, artist. His opinions, whatever they are, do not devitalize his fiction. His short narratives are as skilful as Maupassant's in at least one respect, compression, sinewy economy. He can put in ten pages the domestic tragedy of a lifetime. He is a fine or, rather, a firm craftsman, and though the man rages, the artist has the artist's restaint and every other literary virtue short of ultimate beauty. He sets down terrible things with a cool succinctness. One story ends thus: "The children had become burdens and the once beloved wife a secret enemy despised and despising him. And the cause of all this unhappiness? The want of bread! And yet the large storehouses of the new world were breaking down under the weight of an over-abundant supply of wheat. What a world of contradictions! The manner in which bread was distributed must be at fault. Science, which has replaced religion, has no answer to give; it merely states facts and allows the children to die of hunger and the parents of thirst."

"The Red Room" is a satire on life in Stockholm, on life everywhere. The pathetic struggle of the artistic and literary career, its follies and pretenses, the fatuity of politics, the dishonesty of journalism, the disillusion that awaits the aspiring actor, all these things run riot through the lively pages. Strindberg's satire is severe, it is sometimes hard, but it is not mean. He has a large if rather distant sympathy for the poor fellows whose aspirations, failures, dissipations, and friendships he portrays. Of two young critics he says: "And they wrote of human merit and human unworthiness and broke hearts as if they were breaking egg-shells." He writes of their unconscious inhumanity and blindness in a way that reveals his own clearness of vision and fundamental humanity. The laughter of a somber humorist has in it a tenderness unknown to merry natures.

The dramatic and literary critic may profitably read the chapter called "Checkmate," in which the young journalist is made to say: "The public does not want to have an opinion, it wants to satisfy its passions. If I praise your enemy you writhe like a worm and tell me that I have no judgment; if I praise your friend, you tell me that I have. Take that last piece of the Dramatic Theatre, Fatty, which has just been published in book form. . . . It's quite safe to say that there isn't enough action in it: that's a phrase the public knows well; laugh a little at the 'beautiful language'; that's good, old disparaging praise; then attack the management for having accepted such a play and point out that the moral teaching is doubtful—a very safe thing to say about most things."

Strindberg's imagination visualized and dramatized everything. He made plays of an astonishing variety of ideas ranging from wild poetic fantasy to grim realism—a range as great as Ibsen's and greater than Hauptmann's.

Glance at those in the third volume of Mr. Björkman's translations, not to analyze them but merely to note their diversity. "Swanwhite" is a fairy fantasy of love, confessedly inspired by Maeterlinck, yet in no sense an imitation of him. "Advent" is a Christmas miracle play, which embodies a gentle sermon on the forgiveness of sins—a strange sermon from the man who wrote the last chapter of "By the Open Sea!" "Debit and Credit" is a realistic sketch portraying the man who succeeds at the expense of other people. "The Thunderstorm" plays upon an old theme, one that Strindberg knew by experience, the failure of marriage between an elderly man and a young woman. It ends rather serenely for Strindberg, whose last years were not peaceful: "It's getting dark, but then comes reason to light us with its bull's-eyes, so that we don't go astray. . . . Close the windows and pull down the shades so that all memories can lie down and sleep in peace of old age."

In "After the Fire" the vanity and dishonesty of petty people are ruthlessly exposed. The Stranger who finds all reputations to have been based on sham and all pride founded on wind, is said to be Strindberg himself. "Vanity, vanity. . . . You tiny earth; you, the densest and heaviest of all planets—that's what makes everything on you so heavy—so heavy to breathe, so heavy to carry. The cross is your symbol, but it might just as well have been a fool's cap or a strait-jacket—you world of delusions and deluded!"

TAGORE

TAGORE.

SOMETIMES the world, or a section of it, goes wildly cheering after a prophet; and a stranger, watching the multitude, wonders wherein lies the greatness of the great man. The sceptic may be too ignorant to understand or he may be too clear-sighted to be deceived. Not many years ago the tom-tom of the Nobel Prize beat before the tent of the modest and inoffensive Hindoo poet, Rabindranath Tagore. English critics and poets of first-rate authority have called him wonderful. For all I know he may be wonderful, for I have not read all his work in English and I am not well acquainted with Bengali. But I submit that in "The Crescent Moon" and "The Gardener," there is not one great line, not one poem that is arresting, compelling, memorable. Moreover, there is much that is false and weak.

> O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute!
> O Farthest End, O the keen call of thy flute!

Now that may do in India, but in our part of the world it is feeble orchestration. The poets of the Bible and English poets since the days of the Elizabethan translation have equipped the celestial choirs with more sounding instruments. One cannot without a smile consider the far end of the cosmos playing a flute or a piccolo. Harken to how a supreme poet makes music worthy of the wide spaces:

> But thou dost set in statelier pageantry,
>   Lauded with tumults of the firmament;
> Thy visible music-blasts make deaf the sky,
>   Thy cymbals clang to fire the Occident,
> Thou dost thy dying so triumphally;
>   I see the crimson blaring of thy shawms.

This is from Francis Thompson's "Ode to the Setting Sun." You see the difference. Thompson's lines are poetry. Tagore's simply are not.

Miss May Sinclair, herself a distinguished artist, says that Mr. Tagore's translation of his Bengali poetry into English "preserves, not only all that is essential and eternal in his poetry, but much of the strange music." That may be so, but how does Miss Sinclair know that? Does she understand Bengali? Does she read it and speak it well enough to be sure that Mr. Tagore has translated himself adequately? Is not she affording an instance of criticism that in an excess of enthusiasm runs beyond its own knowledge? Some of Tagore's lines are mildly sweet, and there are some pretty fancies in the Child-Poems. The poem in "The Gardener," which begins:

> Why do you whisper so faintly in my ears, O
> Death, my Death?

would be faintly impressive if Walt Whitman had never lived.

Not only are Tagore's lines not great but some of his lines are foolish:

> Under the banyan tree you were milking the cow with your hands, tender and fresh as butter.

Perhaps Mr. Tagore did not know that in English "butter fingers" greasily signifies manual ineptitude. I can not take that line seriously, nor understand how Tagore has become one of England's acknowledged poets. He distorts nature with pathetic fallacies which have not verbal splendor to carry them, as the verbal splendor of Shakespeare, Shelley, and Thompson often carries a metaphor that, so to speak, will not hold water.

> I paced alone on the road across the field while the sunset was hiding its last gold like a miser.

The sunset is not in the least like a miser; and a true lover and observer of nature would not allow himself such a niggardly fallacious image. Are not our friends, the poets and critics, victims of the spell which odd things out of the East put on our occidental minds, the spell that makes some people run after queer preachers and philosophers who talk religion through their turbans?

One is reminded that Mr., or Sir Owen Seaman has in his delicious book of parodies, "The

Battle of the Bays", an Edwin-Arnoldy thing that runs like this:

The bulbul hummeth like a book
  Upon the pooh-pooh tree,
And now and then he takes a look
  At you and me,
At me and you.
  Kuchi! Kuchoo!

It is, I confess, sheer perversity that made that stanza come into my head while I was reading Tagore. Tagore does not rhyme; he puts his verses into simple prose, most of which is pleasant enough, but none of which is rich in thought or magnificent in phrase.

Tagore is a faker in the English sense of the word. I do not know what he is in Hindoo. He gives lectures in America to audiences that are, of course, mostly women. Then when he has got all the money he can get from them (for his schools; he is not selfish) he tells them as a Parthian shot that they are idle. If they were not, the poor ignorant dears, he would not have had any audiences or any money. It is caddish to kick the cow that gives the milk. I should rejoice if he took millions from the idle ladies of America to help the ladies of India and to free India from the British murderer and thief. Spoiling the Egyptians is a good game. But it is not playing the game like a man and a philosopher to bite the hand that feeds you.

And it is not manly or philosophic to kiss the hand that strikes you. Tagore with a feeble gesture relinquishes his British title as a protest against British crime in India. If he had been a real philosopher and a true patriot he would not have accepted the title in the first place. The lost leader who sticks a riband in his coat does not recover leadership by throwing the riband away. The political and social beliefs of poets, even of Dante and Shelley and Hugo, are of less importance than their sense of beauty. But there is a connection, not quite impertinent to a purely literary discussion, between the quality of a poet's work and his character as it is expressed when he descends from Parnassus and uses the prose of politicians. It is not surprising that Tagore, who babbles to American chautauquas and allows an English king to tap him on the shoulder, should be a weak and stammering poet. That voice from the east is not impressive. If it is the best that modern India can do, then India is done for intellectually as well as economically.

REMY DE GOURMONT

REMY DE GOURMONT.

IN "Decadence and Other Essays on the Culture of Ideas,"* Mr. William Aspenwall Bradley has made an excellent selection from the work of Remy de Gourmont; one only regrets that space did not permit him to give us more. He has a gift unfortunately rare among translators: he knows his original and he knows how to write the language into which he translates. He even corrects his master in one place: where de Gourmont, stumbling in a language which he has not quite mastered, writes that the English words, "sweet," and "sweat," are *mots de prononciation identique,* Mr. Bradley gently wipes out the blunder with "words which resemble each other." Not that de Gourmont, with his enormous knowledge, made many such mistakes! I merely note the care and delicacy of the translator.

Without pretending too much to the wisdom which should have ensued, I remember like a shock of light, as if a blind man had suddenly gained his vision, my introduction, a few years ago, to the work of de Gourmont (for which my thanks are due to Mr. Martin Loeffler, who is a distinguished musician and only potentially a man of letters). If you wish to have your darkness illuminated, associate with the wise. If you are groping in a foreign literature, the first man to meet is the critic. The little I know about France of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries I owe to having clung to the broad and often elusive coat-tails of Sainte-Beuve. As a guide to the nineteenth century and much else beside—back to Rome and Greece—the most stimulating cicerone is Remy de Gourmont.

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*Decadence and Other Essays on the Culture of Ideas. Remy de Gourmont. Translated by William Aspenwall Bradley. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. 1921.

When he was born, the gods went crazy and put into one person an elf and a sage, Ariel and Prospero, Morgan and Merlin. It is no uncommon thing when you are reading a French book, by an author with whose work you are not familiar, to find facing the title-page a list of books *du même auteur* and to discover that he has published something in all the main divisions of imaginative literature, plays, poems, romances, criticism. It takes a Frenchman to box the literary compass. He assumes that the business of a writer is to write, and he learns and practises all the forms. with varying degrees of success, to be sure, just as a musician, trying all forms, may be at his best in songs or quartettes for strings or symphonies or operas.

De Gourmont played every instrument in the band and played it well. His range and versatility are remarkable even for a Frenchman. He took all knowledge for his province. In spreading his interests wide he never became thin; even when he played on the surface of an idea he somehow, in a page or two, showed the depth of mind and matter underneath. He was, as his American publishers say, poet, critic, dramatist, scholar, biologist, philosopher, novelist, philologist, and grammarian. He was an experimenter and explorer. When he died, just under sixty, he was still looking round with his keen roaming eye, and he was looking sadly, for the war, according to his brother Jean, who writes not sentimentally but like a de Gourmont, killed him.

Even the colossal, universal genius, the Hugo, the Goethe, can not be supreme in every realm of thought, in every type of literary expression. De Gourmont's poetry, to my ignorant alien ear, is not among the best in that prolific and still living period of French poetry which he as critic did so much to encourage. As for de Gourmont's fiction, "Une Nuit au Luxembourg," which he might have tossed with a wink into the lap of Anatole France, does not greatly enrich French fiction, which is already rich in similar achievements. "Couleurs" consists of delightful twittings on ideas, and surely is not greatly important in a nation where one man of letters out of four has mastered the art of the *conte*.

De Gourmont is supremely the critic, the man who digests, interprets, reorganizes the thoughts of other men and in the process adds to those thoughts. His favorite method of reorganization is disorganization, "dissociation" (and by the way, that word is good in English, as in French, and better than Mr. Bradley's "disassociation"). He pulls ideas to pieces and skilfully puts them together again. He is an analyst, a dissector. But the flowers of the garden are not all plucked to shreds and scattered on the paths, nor are they all taken to the laboratory and subjected to the microscope. De Gourmont is interested in things living and in propagating life. *"Toutes nos fleurs sont fraîches, jeunes et pleines d'amour."* He surveys wildernesses and lays out gardens. No other man was ever blessed with such a combination of the safe, sane, intellectually comfortable and the restless, daring, venturesome.

He loves paradoxes because life is full of contradictions, and his paradoxes are often elucidations and conciliations of conflicting ideas, never the cheap and facile paradoxes of a Chesterton. Is Mallarmé obscure? There is never absolute, literal obscurity in an honestly written work. Besides, there are too few obscure writers in French. This from a Frenchman whose own writing is a marvel of clarity even when he is handling subtle and difficult ideas! Moreover, de Gourmont's essays on language and style are studies in precision, in definition.

De Gourmont is a wise man, who, like Socrates and William James, is not afraid to joke, and some of his perversities are uttered with his ironic tongue in his cheek. Like all fine humorists he is profoundly serious, and the delicate play of his fingers is backed by terrific muscular scholarship. His method is to appear to be casual, to make the review of a book *"une occasion de parler un peu"* and then to pack into six pages the reading of a lifetime. He manipulates Brunetière into the corner and annihilates him before you have time to realize that there is no button on the rapier.

For all his tolerant smile and sceptical shrug, de Gourmont is fighting valiantly for ideas. He wants ideas liberated but not loose, and in the very act of freeing them he defines and fixes them. He divides long-mated notions in order to reassemble them according to his private logic. For he is the most wilful and individual of critics. The journalistic multiplicity of his subjects is unified by a great personality. The "dissociator" of ideas is a constructive thinker, one of the greatest of critics in a nation of critics and sufficient in himself to stand as smiling refutation of Croce's dictum that "French criticism is notably weak whenever the fundamentals of art are concerned." If there is a fundamental of art that de Gourmont missed, I doubt whether it is to be discovered in any German or Italian book. For de Gourmont's reading embraced the literature of Europe, and he was especially alert to philosophic criticism. He was forever in search of principles; but the result of his quest is not a massive disquisition. The solidity of his learning and the systematic coherence of his ideas are concealed from the unwary reader by the lightness of his tone and also by his brevity, the gift, which belongs to the race of Montaigne and Voltaire, of saying everything in a few sentences. His essays are light as a feather and yet they carry tons of information. The aeroplane looks like a bird but it is a heavy and elaborate piece of machinery.

De Gourmont lived in an ivory tower, the tower of a wizard who combined the knowledge of an ancient necromancer with that of a modern chemist. He was much alone, for only in solitude can a man read as much as de Gourmont read and write about it in serene meditation. Nevertheless, he was in and of the world of writers; he was an active and friendly editor; he made the *Mercure de France;* he encouraged the youngest and bravest of his day; many of his notes record conversations with the finest men of his time. He spent his days with *la jeunesse* and his nights with aged wisdom. When he retired to his ivory tower he carried under one arm a volume of mediæval Latin, to add to his enormous library, already neatly stowed in his head, and under the other arm the manuscript of the youngest French poet.

In one of his essays de Gourmont plays charmingly with the reviewer's too facile use of "great"; "great writer," "very great writer." Despite that delightful warning I dare say that de Gourmont is a *très grand écrivain,* not a great poet nor a great novelist, but the greatest critic that has been born, even in France where critics are wont to be born.

SWIFT'S RELATIONS WITH WOMEN

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"CONTROVERSY," says the editor of the Swift-Vanessa letters,* "might have been more moderate in tone and more fruitful of result, if writers had always remembered that, though grounds of conjecture are abundant, the data for forming a judgment are manifestly incomplete." Leslie Stephen, a shrewd and cautious biographer, with a lawyer's gift for handling evidence, says "This is one of those cases in which we feel that even biographers are not omniscient; and I must leave it to my readers to choose their own theory, only suggesting that readers, too, are fallible."

I propose an explanation of Swift, but propose it only as a conjecture, an hypothesis. I shall not even argue it up to the point of positive belief; certainly I shall not push it beyond the line where belief borders knowledge. Conjecture is good if it remains clearly in the realm of conjecture, an honest area of thought, and does not try to sneak over into the land of things proved.

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*Vanessa and Her Correspondence with Jonathan Swift. Letters edited for the first time from originals. With an introduction by A. Martin Freeman. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

All of Swift's relations with women, and much else in his life, may be accounted for by the supposition that early he discovered or suspected that he was insane, that he believed his insanity might be transmissible, that he was consequently afraid to have children, that he was honest and strong enough to keep himself in check, that the resulting suppression made him irascible and bitter, that he was a vigorous and passionate man, that his quick shifts from tender fooling to savage satire, his friendly and brutal moods, his strutting arrogance that amazed the coffee houses, were not due to any tomfoolery of politics or thwarted ambition in the petty matter of advancement in the church but were due to a conflict, honorably won by Swift, in the place where a man lives. The "early" in this supposition is important. Leslie Stephen, quoting the familiar dark prophecy of Swift at the age of fifty: "I shall be like that tree; I shall die at the top," justly observes that "a man haunted perpetually by such forebodings might well think that marriage was not for him." But Stephen is dealing with Swift in middle age and offering an explanation of why, assuming that Swift was not already married to Stella, he did not marry Vanessa. Let us place the beginning of the perpetual foreboding early in Swift's life and see if the main facts, so far as we know them, will lie upon this supposition.

Swift's attacks of vertigo began in his youth. He attributed his illness to an over-consumption of fruit when he was twenty-one. Swift knew better than that. Even if we assume that medical science in the eighteenth century was stupid and backward, Swift was too intelligent to believe that an early period of indigestion accounted for the suffering which afflicted him all his life. He knew, or suspected and feared, what was the matter with him. In 1699, when he was thirty-two, he wrote some resolutions, headed "when I come to be old." Among them is this: "Not to be fond of children or let them come near me hardly." Stephen quotes a friendly commentator as saying: "We do not fortify ourselves with resolutions against what we dislike but against what we feel in our weakness we have reason to believe we are really inclined to." That friendly commentator was right and understood human nature, though he had never lived (Stephen does not name him) to hear about libido, suppression, defence, inversion, and other wise words now current.

Stephen goes wrong, it seems to me, in his following friendly commentation: "Yet it is strange that a man should regard the purest and kindliest of feelings as a weakness to which he was too much inclined." I have not space to quote the rest, which is on page 31 of Stephen in the English Men of Letters. Swift was not fighting against a weakness, he was fighting against a strength. He resolves "not to marry a young woman." In a letter he calls a woman's children her "litter," and that has been quoted by some critics as an example of his brutality. He loves Tom, Dick, and Harry but he hates mankind. Is it not clear? He can not have what he wants, and what he wants is what normally results in children, in more mankind. His resolution, superficially harsh and misanthropic, is a masked, or inverted, expression of desire. Such expression is not, of course, peculiar to literary satirists, but it should be remembered that Swift had supremely the ironic trick of thought, the gift of saying a thing by saying exactly the opposite.

The resolution should be read in the light of the fact that Stella was eighteen years old, a grown and comely woman. But the interpretation of it depends much more closely on the termination of Swift's affair with Varina. The date, 1699, suggests this. He had proposed to Varina, Miss Waring, in 1696, in a letter which is passionate enough, and had been rejected, at least provisionally, on the score of her ill health and his poverty. Four years later, after he had received the living at Laracor and seemed to be on the way to other preferments, she wished to hold him to his word, and he jilted her. There are three explanations. One is that he had fallen in love with Stella and so out of love with the other woman. The second explanation, Leslie Stephen's, is that his ambitions had not been realized, his advancement had not been brilliant, and marriage would have kept his nose to the grind-stone in an obscure living. That explanation is not good, for, though Swift always had an eye to the main chance and was worried about money, power, and position, it is only men of cool blood or men who have extra-marital opportunities to gratify their desires who are ever deterred by considerations of thrift and economy from marrying the beloved woman. Swift was not cold but passionate. And it is inconceivable that he, a clergyman in a small parish, was finding his pleasure in illicit intercourse.

The third explanation, which I venture to suggest, is that between his proposal to Varina in 1696 and his insulting rejection of her in 1700, between his twenty-ninth and thirty-third years, he had discovered a reason why he must not live with a woman. His resolutions, remember, not to marry a young woman and not to be fond of children were written in 1699. How could Stephen believe that those resolutions, with others "pithy and sensible," were "for behavior in a distant future?" Swift's heading, "when I come to be old," means nothing; he is writing from the misery of the moment. Why is the letter in which Swift puts an end to poor Varina so brutal and insulting that, in Stephen's words, no one with a grain of self-respect could accept the conditions of marriage which he lays down? Because he could not tell her the real reason, a reason based on fear rather than on physiological certainty. It is an honestly dishonest letter. It is a perfect example of that perplexing contradiction which appears everywhere in his life and writings, that he was brutally honest, saw through the postures and masks of everybody else, and yet postured, attitudinized, and lied himself. He carried his secret agony with fortitude and alternately raged against the world and fooled with it. In relation to the Varina episode Stephen misses the point, though what he says is true enough: "Swift could be the most persistent and ardent of friends. But when anyone tried to enforce claims no longer congenial to his feelings, the appeal to the galling obligation stung him into ferocity, and brought out the most brutal side of his imperious nature." Though a man has but one heart, yet his relations with his friends are quite different from his passions for women. A proud, ferocious and imperious nature is not the whole story of Swift. It does not give us the real foundation of the story of Varina, of Stella, of Vanessa and the man they loved.

On the foundation which I propose the story of Stella will rest securely, intelligibly. If Swift was married secretly to Stella in 1716—the evidence is not conclusive—the marriage was only a legal ceremony performed perhaps for the purpose of securing her in case her fortunes went wrong or gossip or other circumstances made necessary the protection of his name. Almost certainly there was no physical marriage, no union legal or illegal. Why? He was free and she was free. She was, by his own account, a charming person who would have been quite presentable to his friends and in all ways helpful to a man in middle age who is supposed to need a woman to take care of him. The answer is simply that Swift feared to propagate his tainted stock, that he refrained and suffered. And the "Journal to Stella" is a record of suffering, of passion disguised and writhing. A busy man, with other things to write, does not write that much to a woman he does not love, and he does not write that way to a woman he openly and avowedly loves. The "little language," the silliness, the foolings, the avoidance of direct declaration of love, the semi-paternal injunctions, the gossip about big people, much of it whimsical chatter in which we get only by implication the serious view of Swift and his times that has made it an important historical document, the two or three hintful promises of felicity which commit Swift to nothing, the passages of melancholy and half-humorous old man's grouch—all this is a veiled love letter. It is tingling and nervous and alert and full of pain, not the idle recreation of a tired man of affairs entertaining a child, but the heartbreak of a powerful man of forty-five expressed by indirections to a woman of thirty. Perhaps she understood his spleen and his complaints of ill-health. We may be on the way to understanding them now. Certainly Stephen is off the track when he says that there are "grounds for holding that Swift was constitutionally indisposed to the passion of love." Unless he means by that that Swift knew that there was something in his constitution which made the ultimate realization of love impossible. And Stephen does not mean that, for he speaks of the absence of traces of passion from writings "conspicuous for their amazing sincerity." An amazing example of a sincere biographer missing the trace! Swift's insistence on his "coldness" and his assertion that he did not understand love are precisely an affirmation of what the words deny.

Now enters the third woman of record—there may have been more—in Swift's unhappy sexual life, Vanessa, Esther Vanhomrigh. At the same time that he is writing his long love letter, the "Journal to Stella," he is seeing Vanessa. Of course. It is all explicable. The man can not have the woman he wants and is tantalized by another woman who wants him. He plays and he won't play. He is tormented by the same restraint that keeps him out of Stella's bed. He is handsome, virile, and distinguished. The woman is crazy about him. He is unable to keep away from her, but he is fighting, for reasons known to him, against the impulse to possess her. He plays again, as with Stella, a game which, viewed superficially, is fraudulent and unfair. He is teacher, guide, philosopher, and Dutch uncle. But she is not a docile, gentle girl like Stella. Mr. Freeman, who handles his documents admirably and is not slanted from the truth by moralistic concern for hero or heroine, is, nevertheless, naïve and blind to the facts which he has so carefully considered. He says: "The tragedy, then, was inevitable from the day when Vanessa attempted to arouse in him a love of which he was incapable. It might have been hastened, or its form might have been different, if he had sternly broken with Vanessa as soon as he discovered the nature of her desires." Swift was not incapable, in that sense, and he knew the nature of her desires, for he was not a fool. What he knew also was the nature of his own desires and their possible consequences. That is, I conjecture, the heart of the story of Swift's heart.

WILLIAM JAMES, MAN OF LETTERS

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I.

THE letters of a philosopher usually have the primary, if not exclusive, interest of elucidating and extending in an informal way the ideas expounded in his professional writings. It is for this interest that one would turn to the letters of a thinker who was nothing but a thinker, such as Kant (if, indeed, there is a collection of Kant's letters), and to the correspondence of such a philosopher as Nietzsche, who, aside from his technical contributions to human wisdom, presents fascinating problems in human character, personality, biography. The letters of Williams James* have two distinct values. They appeared at the same moment with his "Collected Essays and Reviews"** and the two publications, taken together, complete the intellectual record of the man. Though master and man can not be separated, yet, as good disciples of James's pluralism, we may be permitted to divide an individual into two "aspects."

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*The Letters of William James. Edited by his son Henry James. Two Vols. Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press.

**Collected Essays and Reviews. William James. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

First let us enjoy the letters, simply as the letters of a man who was, incidentally, a philosopher.

And what letters! The letters of Lamb, of Edward Fitzgerald, are not more delightful. The easiest and pleasantest way to prove that would be to fill the rest of this essay with quotations, and that way would be in consonance with the whimsical spirit of James, who wrote to his youngest son: "Your Ma thinks you'll grow up into a filosofer like me and write books. It is easy enough, all but the writing. You just get it out of other books and write it down." To write a jolly letter to a child, to ridicule yourself and your profession and a the same time to defend an idea with vigor and determination, to poke fun at colleagues and heartily respect them, to be dignified in mental shirt sleeves, to wink one eye and keep two keen eyes on the page or the fact that has to be studied, to fling words with apparent carelessness and never for a moment to lose control of words or thought—all this means a great character and a fine literary artist.

James says of Duveneck, the painter: "I have seen very little of him. The professor is an oppressor of the artist, I fear." It may be that the professor, which James was and officially had to be, oppressed the artist in him. But the artist would not down. If all the philosophic work of James were wiped out by an act of God or by the arguments of philosophers, James, the man of letters, would still survive. I believe that part of the success of James as philosopher was due to his ability to say what he meant not only with logical clarity but with charm, with the skill of the literary artist. Technical Philosophy may immortalize or bury his work. The man, the startling, original person must be imperishable. No matter what subject he touches, his way of saying things is superb. He had an artist's interest in the art of writing. Of a volume of his essays he says: "I am sure of your sympathy in advance for much of their contents. But I am afraid that what you will never appreciate is their wonderful English style! Shakespeare is a little street-boy in comparison!" The wise man has his tongue in his cheek, of course, but there is a serious idea behind the fooling. Of a correspondent's "strictures on my English" he writes: "I have a tendency towards too great colloquiality." What sort of laborious philosopher was it who worried James about his style, his fluent, accurate, imaginative vehicle of thought? It may be that some of James's philosophic ideas are quite wrong. But there is a presumption in favor of the truth of an idea which is well expressed.

James argues somewhere that a style as thick as Hegel's can not be the "authentic mother-tongue of reason." If that is unfair to Hegel, it is a fair revelation of the mind of James. He was an advocate and an exemplar of lucidity of expression, and was always putting to himself and other philosophers the plain question: "Just what do you mean?" But his sharpness of mind, though often aggressive, was never offensive. He seems at times to have dulled the edge of his wit in order not to hurt the other fellow. The editor of the letters has, perhaps wisely, "not included letters that are wholly technical or polemic." Probably the ideas expressed in the technical letters are repeated in James's books. But I should like to see the polemic letters. The editor himself in the act of withholding them has defined their merits: "He rejoiced openly in the controversies which he provoked and engaged in polemics with the good humor and vigor that were the essence of his genius." The touches of polemic writing which appear in the correspondence that is given us reveal this good humor and vigor and make one hungry for more. He was staunch and dexterous in argument and never yielded an inch, but he could stop and laugh at his opponent and at himself. He objected to Huxley's somewhat solemn devotion to "Truth," yet he had a kind of skill in argument that was not unlike Huxley's. He could give a man a smashing blow in the ribs, and even show a quite human irritation, but his exquisite courtesy never failed. His letters to Godkin, of the *Nation,* protesting against unfair criticism of the work of the elder Henry James, are a lesson for critics, and no doubt Godkin's reply was a model of magnanimous contrition.

James had an immense variety of interests outside philosophy, though perhaps it is unphilosophical to imply that anything can lie outside the range of a true philosopher's vision. His letters are written to many different kinds of persons; the best of them, naturally, are to philosophers and men of letters, who evoked from him an amazing multiplicity of ideas and to whom he let fly a delicious compound of sound reason and jocularity. In characterizing other men he characterized himself. For example, what he says about Royce embraces both men perfectly: "that unique mixture of erudition, originality, profundity and vastness, and human wit and leisureliness." He was fortunate in his human and intellectual contacts. An early and abidingly fortunate contact was that with his father, who was also a "filosofer." His last letter to his father is beautiful. It brings tears, of which the most stoical philosopher need not be ashamed; indeed, one might rather be ashamed if the tears did not come. No one outside the family and a few friends has a right to read that letter, but print has extended the privilege. If Mr. E. V. Lucas or any other anthologist makes a new collection of examples of "the gentlest art," the letter from James to his father should be included. In it two men are portrayed, father and son, both magnificently; if either man had been less than great the letter could not have been written.

James was born a philosopher; philosophy was in the blood and in the very air of the household. There is no better instance of the heredity of genius and of predestination to a career. Yet James did not find himself immediately; he floundered about in the world of thought long after the age at which most men have hung out shingles. He was thirty when he was appointed instructor in physiology at Harvard, and his tardiness in establishing himself as a bread-winning citizen fretted him. Lesser men who feel that the expression of their talents has been thwarted or postponed may take comfort from the fact that James's first printed book, the "Psychology," appeared in 1890, when he was forty-eight years old.

The fact that James was an intellectual roamer and did not proceed docilely from a doctor's degree to a position as teacher, in a groove forever, accounts, in part, for the flexibility and variety of his thought. His "dribbling," as he calls it, during years when he suffered from physical illness and a depressing sense of impotence, was not altogether bad for the man or for the philosopher. He wandered about Europe, became bilingual, if not trilingual (he was never quite happy in German speech or German philosophy). His learning was enriched with odds and ends of information such as belong rather to the man of the world than to the professor. If he had lived all his life in Königsberg or Cambridge he would have been neither Kant nor James. To him philosophy was never an affair of remote abstract heavens or of little dusty class rooms. He served academic interests faithfully and did more than any other man to make the department of philosophy at Harvard the finest thing in American university life. But he was in constant rebellion against the academic world and, indeed, against all institutionalism. He wrote to Thomas Davidson: "Why is it that everything in this world is offered to us on no medium terms between either having too much of it or too little? You pine for a professorship. I pine for your leisure to write and study." Yet he had more leisure and freedom than most men. He went abroad whenever he wanted to go, and never knew what it was to be down to his last dollar.

His lateness in finding himself professionally and philosophically is, perhaps, related to his perpetual youth, his eagerness for new ideas, his inability to be fixed and settled. He sometimes grasped at ideas too hastily and welcomed such new arrivals as Wells and Chesterton with a heartiness which, perhaps, they did not quite deserve. But that was the fault of his enthusiastic catholicity. He hated shut minds and shut doors of thought and feared nothing except that some possibly valuable inquiry might be hindered or stopped by stupidity and prejudice. His colleague, Professor Palmer, called him "the finest critical mind of our time." Let the philosophers decide whether that is excessive praise. We mere laymen can know him and enjoy him as he reveals himself in his letters, a vivacious, humorous, affectionate man.

II.

The supreme service of William James to philosophy is the restoration of philosophy to the uses of life. At least that is the tendency of his philosophy. Even though much wisdom still remains shut up in a tower, indifferent to life, and though life may often be ungrateful to and suspicious of such wisdom as is offered to it, nevertheless James's attempt to bring about a *rapprochement* was his finest contribution and is expressed in some of his most glowing pages. He came at the right time and illustrated in himself one of his hearty beliefs that Humanity will produce all the types of thinker that it needs. At the moment when he entered the realm of philosophy, the physical sciences had arrogantly assumed, if not all wisdom, the possession of the correct method of searching for wisdom. On the other hand, the transcendental philosophers held themselves aloof from the physical sciences and ignored psychology. This division of interest in a world which James himself tried to keep manageably split up and pluralistic, was his first philosophic perplexity and, in his treatment of the problem, he committed himself to inconsistencies and self-contradictions, which were partly inherent in the situation and partly due to his temperament.

Through all his writings, from one of his earliest papers (that on Renan's "Dialogues," republished in "Collected Essays and Reviews") to the last chapters of "The Meaning of Truth," James saw philosophers as so many individuals, each fighting under his own banner of truth, and he was puzzled because they would not be reconciled and fight together against the powers of darkness which must be conquered if philosophy is ever to be worth anything, and if there is ever to be any reason why there should be philosophers to sit in comfortably endowed chairs. No critic took more keenly humorous delight than James did in the disputes of the schools, or stirred up with more lively argument the factions whose lack of solidarity he deplored.

Take two examples. While James was young and still under the influence of his laboratory studies he made out a good case for psychology as a natural science, admitting that in its present stage of development it is rather a loose subject, but demanding for its best interests an application of the scientific method. Then he saw that he had gone counter to his own belief in the unity of knowledge, or the unity of study. It occurred to him that something valuable might be lost to psychology if metaphysical and epistemological inquiries were debarred. So in an address to the American Psychological Association, he openly renounced his first position, adding, however, as a half-smiling reservation, that metaphysics should give up some of its nonsense as a condition of admission.

In one of his last papers, that on "Bradley or Bergson," James takes a shrewd pleasure in tracing their resemblances as far as they go, and then laments that they diverge, because if they had kept together they could between them have buried post-Kantian rationalism. For a complexity of partisanship in unity that can not be surpassed! But James's willingness to be pallbearer at the funeral of a philosophic idea was not inconsonant with his determination that some other ideas of doubtful character should be allowed to grow up and thrive. For the old idea had had its say. The new ideas might be strangled in infancy. Let each new idea have its time and opportunity. Let everything be tried. It is better to be credulous than bigoted, but to be excessively one or the other is not befitting a philosopher.

Aside from certain technical problems, James's philosophic attitude was always determined by his answer to the question: On which side lies the greater force and fullness of life, the possibility of richness, novelty, adventure? In 1895, at the height of his power as a man—though perhaps he grew wiser as he grew older—he ends a paper on "Degeneration and Genius" thus: "The real lesson of the genius-books is that we should welcome sensibilities, impulses, and obsessions if we have them, as long as by their means the field of our experience grows deeper and we contribute the better to the race's stores; that we should broaden our notion of health instead of narrowing it; that we should regard no single element of weakness as fatal—in short, that we should *not be afraid of life.*" The italics are his. If that is not good psychological argument, then there is something the matter with the science of psychology. It is only just such good sense as this that a common man can understand, and the humanity and eloquence of it are better than argument.

Can a common man understand philosophy? James believed that he can both understand it and express it. Two or three times he quotes the saying of his friend the carpenter: "There is very little difference between one man and another, but what little difference there is is very important." He has a hot contempt for Renan's cool contempt for *l'homme vulgaire,* and he admires Clifford's "lavishly generous confidence in the worthiness of average human nature to be told all the truth, the lack of which in Goethe made him an inspiration to the few but a cold riddle to the many"—and the possession of which by James made him a greater teacher of youth.

He was an instinctive democrat and was always on the side of what, in his social environment, was the unpopular minority. Like Whitman, of whom he often speaks with admiration, he was a born individual aristocrat, with no delusions about the intelligence of the herd but an immense faith in its possibilities. His generosity towards the delusions of common men was warmer than towards the delusions of philosophers, because philosophers have opportunities for study—and should know better. He had only one fear, which sometimes took a belligerent form (there is something in his book on psychology about the relation between belligerency and fear); and that fear was lest he or some other philosopher should try to interfere with a possibly good idea, to put sand, not on the tracks, but in the machinery. The vaguely comforting fatalistic belief that good ideas will prevail and bad ones die he regarded as untrue to the history of human thought, and not good for people whose business it is to express thought. James held that it did make a real difference in the world that a saint or a monster, St. Paul or Bonaparte, did not die in his cradle. It does make a difference—the one illustration that James would have laughed at—that James lived to be a philosopher. Ideas do sometimes seem just to happen, to grow without human guidance, but the precious ideas have to be fought for. Matthew Arnold's idea, that it is our duty to make the best ideas prevail, may seem priggish and dictatorial, yet fundamentally James had the same idea. Pluralism, he says, is not for sick souls but for those in whom the fighting-spirit is alive. Philosophy does not flourish by accident. Men make it.

Therefore, philosophy begins in the human mind, and is the history of the action of mind on experience. James was from the very beginning a student of the human mind. He began in epistemology and he ended there. One of his earliest essays is a rather too easy slipping of his knife into the "operose ineptitude" of Spencer's definition of mind, and his last word about a philosophic puzzle was: "We shall not understand these alterations of consciousness either in this generation or the next."

The right self-contradiction consists not in turning in obedience to others, but in going against the wind from whichever direction it blows. James attacked the too-much in any philosophy, even his own. To the over-credulous he preached caution; to the over-sceptical, faith. This sort of antagonism between two ideas is not contradiction but balance of mind. Apropos Professor Schiller and others he demands an "all-round statement in classic style," and, himself the jolliest joker that ever was in philosophy, he recommends that Mr. Schiller "tone down a little the exuberance of his polemic wit." But to the too sober he says, "Our errors are not such awfully solemn things. A certain lightness of heart seems healthier than this excessive nervousness in their behalf."

As a philosopher, James had to use the terms peculiar to his craft, but he so strongly sustained those terms in a structure of words which can be fond in a pocket-dictionary that the peculiar terms of the craft become intelligible to simple literate men, and it may be that thereby they become more intelligible as mere philosophic terms. Like Bergson he is a poet and a humorist in his analogies and illustrations. When we read that "the feeling of 'q' knows whatever reality it resembles," many of us, including the philosophers, I suspect, are lost in the dark. But when we read that "the Kilkenny cats of fable could leave a residuum in the shape of their undevoured tails, but the Kilkenny cats of existence as it appears in the pages of Hegel are all-devouring, and leave no residuum"—then we begin to believe that philosophy may be a human and amusing study and that to be great in philosophy it is not necessary always to be thinking of the other side of the moon.

BIOGRAPHIES OF POE

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THE biography of Poe got a wrong start immediately after his death when Griswold slandered him or at least put a false emphasis on certain aspects of his character. Since then, every book about Poe has had an argumentative tone, a defensive spirit, which in a way is as unfair to Poe as was the first misrepresentation. One sometimes feels like crying: "For heaven's sake read his work and let the man alone!" Yet it is not possible to let Poe alone if you have once looked into his life; his story is one of the fascinating chapters of literary history. Professor Smith says that his book, "Edgar Allen Poe, How to Know Him," "is an attempt to substitute for the travesty the real Poe, to suggest at least the diversity of his interests, his future-mindedness, his sanity, and his humanity." On the whole, Professor Smith's attempt is successful and he does help us to realize Poe's personality, "that co-ordination of thought and mood and conduct, of social action and reaction, of daily interest and aim," which Professor Smith justly says, "finds no portrayal in the biographies of Poe."

It is an odd fact that after Griswold two of the more authoritative biographers of Poe did not like him. One was Richard Henry Stoddard; the other, Mr. George E. Woodberry. Neither one, I suspect, chose Poe as a congenial, or even as an interesting subject. The task of writing his biography seems to have fallen to both men as a literary chore; to Stoddard as an official critic who knew Poe, and to Mr. Woodberry as a rising young man of literary talent who thirty years ago was selected by the editor of the "American Men of Letters" to write the life of Poe. Of course, Mr. Woodberry is a competent workman. When, in the year of Poe's centennial, he enlarged his "Life" to two volumes, he put together in a judicial, objective style probably all the facts that we need to know. But his æsthetic judgments are at best unsympathetic. It may be that the lyric "To Helen" has been overpraised, though it is difficult to understand how there can be too much praise for a masterpiece. And when Mr. Woodberry says of our American writers that they were concerned "not with the transitory, but the eternal; and, excepting Poe, they were all artists of the beautiful," we seem to have an example of that sort of moralistic æsthetics which sounds lofty but is only bosh. "If Poe was not an artist of the beautiful," Professor Smith asks, "what was he an artist of?"

That is a good, sensible question and Professor Smith's answer, if not as eloquent as some things that have been written by Poe's European admirers, is sound and appreciative. If it be an American tendency to overrate our national men of genius, we have certainly not displayed that tendency in relation to the American writer who more than any other has captured the imagination of Europeans, for undoubtedly the finest criticism of Poe has come from our brethren overseas. Stoddard had but a grudging sense of Poe's merits and ends his account with a remark which contains a partial truth but which, although it is quoted from Dr. Johnson, is a flat anti-climax: "All that can be told with certainty is that he was poor." There seems to be a good deal more to tell than that, and, indeed, the implications of Poe's poverty, as it affected the artist, are better expressed by Stoddard himself when he says that Poe "wrote with fastidious difficulty, and in a style too much above the popular level to be well paid."

American criticism of Poe is thick with moralisms. Thus Lowell wrote: "As a critic Mr. Poe was æsthetically deficient . . . he seemed wanting in the faculty of perceiving the profounder ethics of art." But, we may well ask, what is "the profounder ethics of art," and who, except a New England preacher, wants to be bothered with it in lyric poetry? Poe always focused his attention on beauty, on excellence of workmanship, both in the work of other craftsmen and in his own. The Scottish critic, Mr. John M. Robertson, seems to be nearer the truth than Lowell when he says that Poe "has left a body of widely various criticism which, as such, will better stand critical examination to-day than any similar work produced in England or America in his time." I am glad to see that Professor Smith regards Mr. Robertson's essay on Poe as "the ablest brief treatment in any language." The only exception, which Mr. Robertson himself would be the first to make, is the essay by the French critic Emile Hennequin.

But Professor Smith does not quite escape American moralism in his effort to accentuate Poe's virtues. He makes too much of Poe's interest in religion, which was surely nothing but a purely intellectual and critical interest, and his recurrent emphasis on Poe's Americanism is too tiresomely patriotic even for a professor in the United States Naval Academy. Poe was keen for the best interests of American literature, zealous in searching out any note of promise in a new poet and in pointing to the weak spots in men of acknowledged talent. He sometimes exhibits a kind of local Southern patriotism which does not much interest us now. But on the whole, he was detached from the issues of politics, an unlocalized, almost disembodied genius whose apparition in the United States of America is still an endless wonder to European critics.

One possible influence of Poe's environment on his art Professor Smith is, so far as I know, the first to point out; and it is a very valuable suggestion, even if it can not be thoroughly proved. In Virginia, more than in any other American State, the English and Scots ballads survive by oral tradition. It is possible that as a child Poe heard these ballads recited or sung, and from them derived his sense of refrain and repetition. To the influence of the ballad Professor Smith adds the possible influence of plantation melodies as "subsidiary sources of Poe's lyrical technique." He is certainly right in thinking that Poe's originality consists not in the contribution of a new form to poetry but in his individual development of forms already established. His charm resides in the color of his words rather than in the shape of his stanzas. But of course the two things are inseparable and whoever tries to analyse them is hopelessly baffled. Poe's own attempt to explain how the trick is done is far from explaining it, and if he could not expound in prose the secret of poetry, nobody can.

For Poe was first and always a critic, inquisitive of methods, and making his effects with cool calculation. Even if his tales of horror no longer give us the creeps, they will always give to any one who cares about writing, that shiver of pleasure which comes when we watch a dexterous craftsman at work. Professor Smith calls Poe the "father of the short story," but he came too late to be credited with such paternity. After all, Boccaccio and whoever made "The Arabian Nights" lived long before Poe, and in Poe's stories are evident traces of old tales of magic and mystery. What Poe did was to rationalize the short story so highly, in some cases, as to sacrifice the illusion of spontaneity which is one of the merits of a tale that seems to tell itself.

With the purpose of suggesting the range of Poe's intellectual interest and of classifying some of his miscellaneous work that does not fall into certain obvious groups, Professor Smith has adopted the term "frontiersman." The image evoked by that word somehow does not fit Poe. He was, in a sense, an explorer of ideas, and he had a genuine gift for philosophy which he did not live to develop. We could spare many of his short stories rather than lose

"Eureka." If it is not profound philosophy and if it does not solve the riddle of the universe, it is profound in its beauty, a prose poem. Poe's science is obsolete, no doubt, and even in the science of his day he was little more than an amateur. But the mark of a great intellect is on every page. An amazing mind! He succeeded in all forms of literary art which he tried. If the poet or the critic or the short-story writer should be obliterated, there would still remain a man of genius.

Critics and biographers of Poe, like Poe himself, cannot let his drink alone. They deny or blame or pity without understanding. The question of Poe and alcohol seems to have been finally answered by a California physician, John W. Robertson, in a book which I have not seen but which I know only through reviewers' accounts of it. This physician finds from the evidence that Poe was a dipsomaniac. Dipsomania is not drunkenness nor riotous dissipation; it is a disease. Poe, like other victims of the disease, had to have periodic bouts with the demon, got fearfully sick, and when he recovered stayed cold sober until his next attack. This accounts for Poe's written anathemas against alcohol, which puzzled Remy de Gourmont. De Gourmont says: *"Il ne pouvait plus travailler que dans l'hallucination de l'ivresse."* Quite the contrary is the case. Poe could not do a stroke of work under the inspiration of whiskey; he was not one of those mad geniuses who conceive masterpieces in a tavern or with a bottle beside the ink-pot. That is proved, or indicated, by his critical clarity, the almost passionless rationality of his tales and poems, and even by the physical perfection of his manuscripts. He worked between his joyless debauches, and he worked hard. His melancholy and love of terror, his preoccupation with defects of will and remorse, whatever "morbidity" there is in his writings, may have some relation to his disease. But as an artist he achieved his dark effects by sheer force of intellect in hours of clear-eyed sobriety. Only in a literary sense is he the author of "MS. Found in a Bottle."

BIOGRAPHIES OF WHITMAN

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THE one fault that can be found with Traubel's "With Walt Whitman in Camden" is that there is too much of it. But that is a fault easily remedied without blotting a line of the record. Books that contain too little may cheat us of desired knowledge, whereas books that contain too much can do no harm; every reader has the privilege of not reading at all or of dipping into a book here and there. Traubel's method is admirable; it is that of a documentary historian. He set down Whitman's talk and such impressions and facts as the biographer recorded at the moment, and he reproduced the letters in the order in which Whitman gave them to him. He did not presume to select from Whitman's conversation what now seems most interesting or most to Whitman's credit, but he gave you all that he had for you to enjoy or ignore and for other biographers and historians to make use of as they will.

Traubel made no concessions to the fact that readers have to catch trains and read other books, and he ignored, perhaps to his personal disadvantage, certain exigencies of publication, such as the publisher's obvious need to interest as many people as possible with the least possible expenditure. Traubel's method is simple from an artistic point of view, requiring nothing but accuracy, courage and industry. Yet the method is a great strain on all concerned. Traubel could stand it. Evidently the publishers thought they could stand it. The reader can stand it, because, as I have said, he can take as much or as little as suits him. The real question is whether Whitman can stand it. And the amazing man *can* stand it. Consider that in the years when Traubel knew him Whitman was an invalid, broken by his services as nurse and brother of soldiers during the war. He was a garrulous old man talking to men who loved him and who, though no servile worshippers of him or anyone else, encouraged him to reminiscence and the utterance of offhand opinion. Now that is a severe test. Not many old men, even men of great achievement in action or art, could last for more than a small volume. Whitman is worth these hundreds and hundreds of pages. For he was a great talker, full of experience and endowed with the gift of speech. Almost every day, according to Traubel's record, he hit off an interesting idea and turned it in a Whitmanese way. He repeats himself. He makes remarks that do not amount to much. But he is never a bore. Line by line he and Traubel, egotists both, but honest, thoughtful, artfully inartistic, have drawn a portrait, the like of which is not to be found. For once a literary man is as big as his literary work. Traubel was a very happy biographer, for he had a sort of monopoly of a great subject, and he had not the slightest temptation to omit or defend.

An admirer has called Traubel's work "the most truthful biography in the language." To use the informal mode of Walt Whitman and of his biographer, that ain't exactly so. It ain't the most truthful biography; it's simply a true biography.

"Lincoln," said Whitman, "don't need adorers, worshippers—he needs friends. . . . The great danger with Lincoln for the next fifty years will be that he will be overdone, over-explained, over-exploited—made a good deal too much of—gather about himself a rather mythical aureole." From such danger Traubel did his best to protect Whitman; the biographer's multitudinous veracity preserves a real man and is a heavy impediment to the critic and literary historian of the future who may try to disobey Whitman's injunction not to "prettify" him. If that impossible and tedious universe, the "whole" truth, is not comprehended in these prolific pages, the errors and omissions are due not to the biographer, but to Whitman himself, who had a silent as well as a loquacious side; he had unexplained depths which probably he did not understand himself. When he spoke he tried to say what he thought, but often he did not speak at all, and at least once he said to Traubel: "I don't care to talk about that."

The writer of fiction may invent substance to fit an artistic scheme. The compiler of facts may, under certain conditions, disregard literary form. The biographer or the historian who will have his work read must play skilfully between the double restriction of substance and form. He must be at once man of science and artist. Because of its very great difficulties, because of the high demands it makes upon the writer, biography is rarely well done. One can name few masterpieces of biography in English. Perhaps the only masterpiece that everybody will name is Boswell's Johnson, that extraordinary performance which heaved literary history out of shape and keeps it in a permanent state of distortion. For Johnson was not a first-rate man of letters; he wrote little that is even tolerable to read; his letter to Chesterfield and the preface to the Dictionary are his most vital productions. Moreover, Boswell was a foreordained nonentity. Yet he was a great artist and

Johnson was a great person, and the two of them made a great book; it is a puzzle which makes one fall back, outwitted, to the last ditch of adjectives.

Whitman's opinion of Johnson is interesting, if only in relation to his own biographer's methods. Johnson knew that Boswell was making notes. Traubel, whose word is infallibly good, says that Whitman did not know that his biographer was keeping a record. Whitman did know that Traubel would write about him and he selected the letters and other documents for the "archives." But he was not aware that Traubel was making a diary. Therefore when he talked he was free at least from the constraint imposed on a man who knows that his spoken words are to appear in print.

When Whitman was 69 years old he began to read Boswell; he refers to him a dozen times in the course of the year, thereby showing that Boswell interested him, for when Whitman was not interested in a book he simply forgot it. He thought that Johnson "talked for effect—seemed rather inclined to bark men down, like the biggest dog—indeed, a spice of dishonesty palpably possessed him. Johnson tried rather to impress than to be true." "He was on stilts always—he belongs to the self-conscious literary class, who live in a house of rules and never get into the open air." However, note this significant confession: "I read it through, looked it through, rather—persisted in spite of fifty temptations to throw it down. I don't know who tried me most —Johnson or Boswell. The book lasts—it seems to have elements of life—but I will do nothing to pass it on." There is the comment of the lion on the bear. No, these zoölogical metaphors are quite false. Benevolent and burly male persons are not, even by Whitmanian identifications, to be named with the brutes.

Some day a biographer with the right talent and in possession of all Traubel's material, cognizant of social ideals and facts and sensitive to poetry, will write a good life of Whitman. So far as I know, there is no satisfactory biography of our one magnificent American poet. Traubel was not able to do it. He was properly employed in gathering and publishing the fundamental record. Moreover, his style, perfectly fitted to short hand notes, is, in continuous composition, abominable. I loved him with all my Whitmanian heart and read him, because of every four of his sentences one says something worth while. But ten sentences of his in a row hurt like a corduroy road. I have to get out and walk and rub myself.

Several literary men have tried to write Whitman's life and they have failed. Professor Bliss

Perry's book is fatuous. He had no excuse to write about Whitman at all, except in so far forth as a publisher's request to an alleged literary man to do a book for an established series furnishes a practical excuse.

The critical study of Whitman by Mr. Basil De Selincourt is sympathetic and discerning as regards what may be called the purely literary side. He understands what Whitman says and takes him for granted as one of the world's supreme poets. He conceives the essential unity of Whitman's thought, a unity that should be obvious but evidently is not to some readers and critics who treat Whitman as a collection of more or less impressive fragments. Mr. De Selincourt's analysis of Whitman's form is instructive, appreciative, though a trifle academic, not wholly emancipated from schoolroom rules of prosody. If you will read Whitman aloud, pronouncing the words as they are pronounced in prose, and emphasizing them according to the sense, the scansion will take care of itself. When a line is bad (and Whitman, like most of the other great poets, wrote bad lines) it won't work by any effort of elocution. The good lines, if you have an ear in your head and a tongue in your mouth, chant themselves, and you can forget all about iambics and hexameters.

Where Mr. De Selincourt fails is in his account of Whitman's notions of liberty, democracy, America, the future. Book-people do not understand these things, especially English book-people, who assume that America produced Whitman because it was a land of liberty. It was not. It was, like the rest of the world, a land of plutocracy, convention, servility. It is complimentary to us but unhappily not true to say that "America stands for the passionate reassertion of certain beliefs which life, to those who look back upon it, seems always to stultify, but which, to those who can look forward, appears as the very spirit and power of life itself —'the urge, the ardour, the unconquerable will'."

As a matter of fact, America does not stand for any such thing and Whitman does not stand for America. He is a revolutionist in revolt against the American fact and celebrating a possible American future. Official America tried to throttle him. Conventional America ignored him. Literary and revolutionary spirits in England and America welcomed him, for they are free spirits, intellectually free, under any economic conditions and in any part of the world. Whitman himself did not understand why he was acclaimed in England by more men and better men than in America. It was simply because English thinkers, writers, poets, with minds capable of appreciating him, outnumbered their American brothers ten to one.

Two American ladies once called on Tennyson. He asked them whether they knew Walt Whitman. They confessed that they did not. "Then," said he, "you do not know the greatest man in America."

GEORGE E. WOODBERRY

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A MAN'S place in the generations of mankind is not wholly determined by the date of his birth. If William James were alive he would be eighty years old; but he belongs to us, to the living present. Mr. George Edward Woodberry is only sixty-seven; yet he already seems like the last figure in a tradition which has come to an end—so far as any period in literature may truly be said to end. James was aware of something like this twenty years ago. He gave Mr. Woodberry the praise that is his due, but expressed at the same time his essential weakness. Of "The Heart of Man" James wrote in a letter:

> The essays are grave and noble in the extreme. I hail another American author. They can't be popular, and for cause. The respect of him for the Queen's English, the classic leisureliness and explicitness, which give so rare a dignity to his style, also take from it that which our generation seems to need, .the sudden word, the unmeditated transition, the flash of perception that makes reasonings unnecessary. Poor Woodberry, so high, so true, so good, so original in his total make-up, and yet so unoriginal if you take him spot-wise—and therefore so ineffective.

Mr. Woodberry is not out of date in a mere journalistic sense or in the hasty judgment of an irreverent generation which affects a trivial contemporaniety and regards even the end of the last century as old fogy. He is out of date because he did not gear with his own times, but remained aloof and backward-looking and so became the last of the Lowells instead of the first of the Woodberrys. It could not have been a conscious or servile emulation on his part, for he has a spirit of his own. But his surroundings and his education were too strong for his fine talent. He was brought up in the twilight of the New England demigods. They handed him the "torch," and he has carried it with pious devotion. To younger men as docile as himself, he became, almost officially, the representative in the flesh of the elders over whose graves he prayed. His publishers announce with pride, with no sense of the depressing implications of what they are saying, that there is a Woodberry Society, "probably the only organization in America dedicated to a living writer." Thus the anachronism is fulfilled. Mr. Woodberry was old when he was young, and he is an institution before he is dead. Some books are epoch making; other books, even great and original books, lie comfortably in their times without being either innovative or conclusive; Mr. Woodbery's six solid volumes* are epoch closing, a collection of such words as will not be written again by a man of genuine talent and wisdom.

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*Collected Essays of George Edward Woodberry. 6 vols. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1921.

The feeling that Mr. Woodberry is a voice from the past that immediately preceded him comes over me most heavily when I read his essays on Lowell's Addresses, on Democracy, and on Wendell Phillips. It may be only the essayist's strict fidelity to Lowell's ideas—no doubt a merit—which leaves the impression that the essayist knows only what Lowell knew and no more, that the pupil has not moved a step beyond the master. It is Lowell over again without the slightest addition from the lessons of time. The London *Nation* has said of Mr. Woodberry's essays that most of them have "a unity and life that make many of Lowell's seem those of a shrewd but old-fashioned amateur." Yet Lowell was at least a vivid amateur, who expressed something that belonged to the 'fifties, 'sixties and 'seventies; and he had an old gentleman's right to be old in the 'eighties. It is not to be expected that a critic should begin where Lowell leaves off—only a thinker of real genius makes such long strides. But the critic following Lowell in time and not moving half a step ahead of him seems older than Lowell himself.

The same thing is true of the address on Wendell Phillips, "The Faith of an American." It is fine, even eloquent, but it is abstract and curiously old-fashioned. Phillips in his own utterances is more of to-day and of to-morrow than is his eulogist who was a child in Beverley when Phillips was in mid-career. The reason, of course, is that Phillips was a fighter, hot with real issues, and it is not the critic's business to fight but to examine the ideas of the fighter. These ideas necessarily become somewhat abstract when a critic quotes or rephrases them, especially since Phillips was an orator and flung at his audiences sweeping generalities which in a less inspired man are mere tall talk. But Mr. Woodberry devitalizes Phillips, especially the later Phillips who went on from one issue to the next until he dropped. Mr. Woodberry has not a single clear, plain word about one of Phillips' last fights, that for the Labor party. Mr. Woodberry stops with the actual Phillips before Phillips stopped, and the end of the address fades out in vagueness and platitude. There is something rather touching about Mr. Woodberry's declaration: "I know that what I have said to-night is heavy with risk." One looks in vain to discover the risk. Surely in 1911, when the address was delivered, a man might talk in Mr. Woodberry's mild way every night in the week and invite no more severe punishment than a scolding from Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler.

Mr. Woodberry's ideas and his expressions are all gentle, though not timid nor emasculate. His general faith in "Democracy" is too serenely above the tumult to disturb anybody or provoke a riot call in the quietude of Beverley. I do not know what he means by "Democracy," whether such actual democracy as existed in America in 1899, or some beautiful dream of the future. If democracy is a dream, an unrealized dream, then any beautiful thing a poet says about it is true. But Mr. Woodberry seems to be talking about something actually existing, something already realized in considerable part if not completely, for he says: "Democracy has its great career, for the first time, in our national being, and exhibits here most purely its formative powers, and unfolds destiny on the grand scale." That was not true twenty years ago, and it is certainly not true now. It is the sort of thing that Emerson and Lowell could say with rousing conviction, but twenty years ago it was as obsolete as a beaver hat except in newspaper editorials and political speeches, where it is still going strong—even if not quite so strong as it used to be.

Mr. Woodberry seems to imply that he is somewhat more of a realist than Lowell. But he is in fact less of a realist than Lowell; for Lowell in his time did grapple with the facts of politics. In poetry it is not necessary, it is better not, to be a realist. But in dealing with politics and contemporaneous history the true citizen must be a realist and leave it to the politicians to fly with the eagle. No wisdom is to be derived from such a statement as this: "There is always an ideality of the human spirit in all its [Democracy's] works, if one will search them out." Or this: "Democracy is a mode of dealing with souls." Or this: "Not that other governments have not had regard to the soul, but in democracy, it is spirituality that gives the law and rules the issue." It is, alas, not true that "education, high education even, is more respected and counts for more in a democracy than under the older systems," or that "the law becomes the embodied persuasion of the community," or that "all these blessings [aversion to war, devotion to public duty and many other enumerated virtues] unconfined as the element, belong to all our people."

Mr. Woodberry's democracy simply does not exist and never did exist. Yet there is one existent glory of my country which I believe I appreciate better than he does. He says: "It behooves us, especially, to be modest, for our magnificent America has never yet produced a poet even of the rank of Gray." That was written fourteen years after the death of Whitman. Mr. Woodberry's democracy had not yet come along, but one of its great poets had arrived and departed leaving Mr. Woodberry none the wiser. There is another glory of my country which I appreciate better than Mr. Woodberry does—Poe, whose poetry Mr. Woodberry has never understood, though he has written what is altogether the best biography of the man! To save the six best lyrics of Poe, I would, if such a sacrifice were necessary, cheerfully sink Gray in the deepest sea of oblivion, "Elegy," letters and all. But that is only a slight difference of judgment, and there is no more futile business than to draw up minor poets in grades and ranks. Whitman is another matter; the critic who misses him in this day of the world is simply incompetent. The excuse for Mr. Woodberry is that he does not belong to this day of the world.

There is something pathetic about Mr. Woodberry's patriotism. He sincerely believes that "America's title to glory is her service to human liberty." He has never been delivered from the superstition that "the sense of justice is the bedrock of the Puritan soul"—the Puritan soul, narrow, despotic, cruelly unjust! But when Mr. Woodberry leaves politics and patriotism and religion and returns to art and literature where he is at home, he puts his finger ruefully on the real rock of the Puritan soul, recalling the Puritan's hostility to the theatre and regretting "the American inhibition" "which rejects the nude in sculpture and painting, not only forfeiting thereby the supreme of Greek genius and sanity, but to the prejudice, also, of human dignity." Mr. Woodberry is himself a Puritan, yearning to be free but chained to New England granite, and since he can not get free on this planet he looks up to the heavens where the God of his fathers used to dwell, but where he can find only abstract and vague ideas. Mr. Woodberry's tendency to abstract phrases, which on pressure yield nothing, vitiates his literary essays, the essays in which a professional critic ought to be most concrete, definite, and nourishing. The trouble may be that his views are too high and too broad for the limited vision of a common man; but I think his trouble is that he has not the true philosopher's power to make a long idea, bridging time and space, stand up under its own weight; there is a lack of solid timber and concrete. His best essays are those on individual authors in which he has the selected specific substance of another man's thought to work on. As ought to happen to a sensitive critic, it sometimes happens that Mr. Woodberry's style takes the very tone of his subject. He is whimsical in his charming little essay on Pepys, an adequate trifle; he is grave and quiet when he writes about Gray; and Swinburne so stirs him that his prose awakes and sparkles with metaphor. Even in this essay, however, he can not help demoralizing poetry by moralizing it into pseudo-philosophic prose. "The imagery (of 'Laus Veneris') has more affinity with modes of sacerdotal art, with symbolism and the attributive in imaginative power than it has with the free vitality that is more properly the sphere of poetry." What does that mean? What is the sphere of poetry? The essays on the older poets would make first-rate introductions to school texts, and I think some of them have been so used. They suffer from the fact that in Mr. Woodberry's time—and since—so many standard essays on Milton, Shakespeare, and the rest were written and rewritten, that unless a critic has a fresh point of view, as Mr. Woodberry has not, another essay is simply another essay.

It must be pleasant to meditate on the great men of letters and from time to time write an essay on Virgil or Montaigne or Matthew Arnold. Some leisure is necessary, for the conscientious critic must read much, and much reading takes time. It may be that in our nervous age, in this country, the scholarly critic with a true taste for letters has disappeared, to return perhaps in a day when Democracy or something better shall have dawned. The comfortable old tradition is dead or dying, and since its good works are extant in print, we need no more contributions to it. As Mr. Woodberry says in an essay called "Culture of the Old School": "The *Gentleman's Magazine*—both the name and the thing belong to a bygone time."

ABRAHAM CAHAN

ABRAHAM CAHAN.

TOWARD the end of the last century there appeared in the magazines some remarkable stories of the East Side of New York by Abraham Cahan. They were not of the crudely comic type of Potash and Perlmutter, nor were they in the somewhat finer mood of sentimental humor which made Myra Kelly deservedly popular. They were humorous and pathetic in a quiet, compelling way, with a gentle austerity of tone even less familiar to American readers then than it is in the days of the Russian invasion. Mr. Howells praised these stories and he and others in editorial authority encouraged the author to write more. A career in the pleasant art of fiction was open to Mr. Cahan. But he withdrew from it and, so far as I know, he wrote no more stories for at least ten years. He has devoted his energy to building up the great *Jewish Daily Forward,* which is not only the voice of the East Side, but a powerful vehicle of social and political ideals that have not yet penetrated the sanctums of Times Square and of the older newspaper world near City Hall and Civic Virtue.

Then, as he approached sixty, Mr. Cahan gave us "The Rise of David Levinsky", a solid mature novel, into which are compacted the reflections of a lifetime. The publisher's notice called it "a story of success in the turmoil of American life." Probably the writer of those words intended to help the book by the appeal which "success" makes to the American mind, for no reader, not even a publisher's clerk, could miss the immense irony of the story. It is indeed the story of a failure. The vanity of great riches was never set forth with more searching sincerity. The helplessness of the individual, even the strong and prosperous, in the economic whirlpool, the loneliness and disillusionment only partly assuaged by pride in commercial achievement, the sacrifice of the intellectual life to the practical, these are the fundamental themes of the book. Levinsky, with the instincts of a scholar and a desire for the finest things in life, is swept into business by circumstances which he hardly understands himself and against which he is powerless; once in the game he makes the most of his abilities, but he never ceases to regard his visible good fortune as poor compensation for the invisible things he has missed. His wealth forces him to associate with all that is vulgar and acquisitive in Jewry and isolates him from all that is idealistic. He finds that he cannot even speak the language of the woman he most admires. Worse still, he is out of sympathy with the aspirations of millions of poor Jews from whose ranks he has sprung. He has no sympathy with those who would break the game up or make new rules, yet he sees that the game is hardly worth playing, even for the winner. "Success! Success! Success! It was the almighty goddess of the hour. Thousands of new fortunes were advertising her gaudy splendors. Newspapers, magazines, and public speeches were full of her glory, and he who found favor in her eyes found favor in the eyes of man."

The portrait of David Levinsky is a portrait of society, not simply of the Jewish section of it, or of New York, but of American business. And business is business whether done by Jew or Gentile. If Levinsky is a triumphant failure, he is so because American business, which shaped him to its ends, is, viewed from any decent regard for humanity, a miserable monster of success. Not that Levinsky is an abstraction, or that the novelist is forcing a thesis. Far from it. The personality of Levinsky is as sharply individualized as the hero of Meredith's "One of Our Conquerors," though with a different kind of subtlety, the subtlety not of detached analysis, but of naïvely simple self-revelation, which of course is not so simple as it sounds.

Mr. Cahan knows how to think through his characters, by letting them do the thinking, as if it were their affair and not his. At the same time he does not perform (nor does any other artist) that foolish and meaningless operation, as expressed by a great poet through a young critic, of holding "the mirror up to nature." Nature in a mirror is just nature, not nature thought out, excogitated, turned to human uses, interpreted in human words. And this is the place to say that Mr. Cahan knows how to use words. There are no great phrases in this book. A simple and (intellectually) honest business man writing his autobiography would not use a great phrase; such a phrase might issue from some enviable person in that intellectual life from which Levinsky was excluded. But there is no banal or inept phrase. Such a man as Mr. Cahan intends Levinsky to be, a man trained in the Talmud, which means verbal sense, and hammered by the facts of life, which means a sense of reality, and a wistful failure, which means imaginative retrospection, says things in a direct, firm, accurate style.

There is no lack of emotion; strong feeling, expressed or implied, runs through the book from beginning to end. But there is a complete absence of eloquence, a deliberate refraining from emphasis, an even manner of setting forth ideas and events impartially for the value inherent in them, an admirable method, the method of a philosophic artist. Here is life, some of it is good, some of it is bad; it is all somewhat pitiable, to be laughed at rather than cried over; nobody is deserving of indignant blame or abuse. It is our business to understand it as well as we can; and though we never can see it in its entirety or with complete clearness, if we make an honest effort to record events and delineate personalities, the events will arrange themselves in a more or less intelligible sequence, and the personalities will be their own commentary upon themselves. An obvious method, but you will read many a book to find one skilful application of it.

It seems to me the method most often employed and carried to the highest degree of perfection by the great Russians. I am driven to the timidity of "seems" because we do much talking about Russian novels without having read many of them or understanding what we have read. But better-informed critics than I have noted that one characteristic of the Russian novel is a benevolent impartiality in its treatment of all kinds of people and a calm contemplation of events horrible, gay, sad, comic. A revolutionist can portray, in fiction, a commissioner of police, whom in real life he would be willing to kill, with a fairness that is more than fair, with a combination of Olympian serenity and human sympathy. He can be a virulent propagandist when he is writing pamphlets, and when he writes fiction he can forget his propaganda or subdue it to art, that is, to a balanced sense of life.

When I say that Mr. Cahan's novel sounds like a good translation of a Russian novel, and that he is a disciple of the Russian novelists, I accuse him of the crime of being an artist and a seer. As a matter of biography, he is a child of Russian literature. And that is why his novel, written in faultless English, is a singular and solitary performance in American fiction. If that strange demand for "the" or "a great American novel," a demand which is at once foolish and the expression of a justifiably proud feeling that a big country ought to have big books, is to be satisfied, perhaps we shall have to ask an East Side Jew to write it for us. That would be an interesting phenomenon for some future Professor Wendell to deal with in a History of American Literature. And by the way, Mr. Cahan is a competent critic. I hope he will give us not only more novels, but a study of Russian literature for the enlightenment of the

American mind. I remember with gratitude an article of his which I read when I was even more ignorant than I am now, on the modern successors to the group of Titans, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky. He put Maxim Gorky in his place and told us (this was before the Russian invasion) about Andreyev and Chekhov. If Mr. Cahan will write a book on Russian literature, I will do my best to establish him in his merited place in American literature.

THOMAS HARDY

THOMAS HARDY.

MR. BERNARD SHAW says, apropos Samuel Butler, that the English people do not deserve to have a genius. Butler himself in a note remarks that America, even America, will probably have men of genius, has indeed, already had one, Walt Whitman, but that he cannot imagine any country where a genius would have more unfortunate surroundings than in America. Mr. Arnold Bennett sends a shot from the same gun in "Milestones," when he makes the millionaire shipbuilder puff his chest and say that there is no greater honor to English character than the way we treat our geniuses. Egad! The unworthiness of the British and American nations to have artists born to them was never more shamefully manifested than by the reception accorded thirty years ago to Hardy's "Jude, the Obscure." Harper's Magazine, which seems to have begun printing the story before the editors had seen the complete manuscript, fell into temporary disfavor with some outraged readers. One British journal distinguished itself by reviewing the book under the caption, "Jude, the Obscene."

It is inconceivable that any nation on the continent of Europe could, through its critics or through any considerable number of readers, so dishonor a masterpiece. For "Jude" is a masterpiece; if it is not Hardy's greatest novel, it is one of his three or four greatest, and that means one of a score of supreme works of prose fiction in the language. If profundity of substance and skill in narrative are both considered, Hardy is without rival among British novelists. His is the crowning achievement in the century of fiction that began with Jane Austen and, happily, has not yet terminated with Joseph Conrad. In his hands the English novel assumed a form which, perhaps without good critical reason, one thinks of as French. Despite the racy localism of scene and character, Hardy's work seems alien to the Anglo-Saxon temperament; it has less in common with the spacious days of great Victoria than with a younger time, whose living masters, Mr. Conrad and Mr. Galsworthy, for example, have taken lessons in art across the channel.

In a prefatory note to "Desperate Remedies," dated February, 1896, Hardy lets fall a casual phrase which indicates that he and others had noted his kinship to the French, but that he was not disposed to acknowledge it fully. He seems to say, with that kind of modest pride which distinguishes him, that he found his method for himself, played the game alone. "As it happened," runs the note, "that certain characteristics which provoked most discussion in my latest story ['Jude'?] were present in this my first—published in 1871, when there was no French name for them—it has seemed best to let them stand unaltered." What characteristics does he intend? And was there no French name for them in 1871? Or had not the British critics begun to use the French name? Are these characteristics his candor, his logic, his classic finish of phrase, a certain cool stateliness of manner, an impersonal, distant way of treating most tender and poignant subjects, a lucid, ironic view of life, perfect proportion, large intellectual pity and freedom from cant, from sentimentality? These are some of his virtues and they are the virtues of several modern French novelists and some of the Russian pupils of the French.

If the ill reception of "Jude" caused Mr. Hardy to foreswear fiction, then the fools have in a way done us harm by cheating us of two or three great novels. Yet genius takes its revenge on a dull world, especially if it is prosperous genius, too well established to be starved out by the stupidity of an inartistic people. If Hardy had been encouraged to write more novels perhaps we should not have had "The Dynasts." And by and by we shall discover what a loss that would have been. It is the greatest epic that we have been privileged to read since Tolstoy's "War and Peace." And it is the best long poem in English since Morris's "The Earthly Paradise." Though it is cast in scenes and acts it is not a drama except in a vast untechnical sense of the word. But epic it is, creation of an enormous imagination which sweeps the universe and manages a cosmic panorama as commandingly as the same imagination dominates a rural kingdom of farms and desolate heaths. If "The Dynasts" and Hardy's shorter poems lack one thing, that one thing is the magical and haunting line, that concatenation of words which is everlastingly beautiful in the context or detached from it. Morris knew that magic. He was born with it, and no reader of Morris, except a critic, will be deceived by his own denial of his divinity when he said in his honest, off-hand way, sensible as Anthony Trollope, that inspiration is nonsense and verse is easy to write.

"The Dynasts" is an extraordinary poem. It is not French, it is not Greek, it is not like anything else in English. Hardy has discarded Christian mythology. He is not childish enough to revert to the Greek. He has invented a new one. His celestial machinery is as strange an apparition in the heavens as the first aeroplane. His hero, Napoleon, rises above the human stature by which the realistic novelist measures man and becomes not only a tool of destiny but a demigod who seems to understand destiny and share the secrets of that impersonal goddess. Those who are curious about Hardy's philosophy (we like his art; his philosophy may lie down and die on the shelf with the other philosophies) will find the closing chorus of "The Dynasts" significant:

> But—a stirring thrills the air
> Like to sounds of joyance there
> That the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!

Such is the ultimate word of this artist who so keenly loves beauty, yet, like some neo-Puritan and latter-day ascetic, cannot draw a lovely woman without reminding you that the skull under the cheeks and behind the passionate eyes is not pretty and will probably endure a long time under ground. Is he of like mind with his chorus at last, and does he believe that the Will is going to grow intelligent and make all things fair?

Perhaps Hardy's proneness to dwell on the skeletonic grin of life is due to his exceeding sensitiveness to beauty. Like Poe and other poets, he cannot abide the ugliness that is in the world, and so he insists on The Conqueror Worm, as a man cannot refrain from thrusting his tongue into the sore tooth. Perhaps Hardy is a reaction against the saccharine optimism of his contemporaries and of those just before his time. They falsified life in their fictions by making everything come out nicely, thank you, on the last page. He leans over backward from that kind of untruth and comes dangerously near to being as false. As between falsity in one direction and falsity in the other, there is no choice, except that we have had so much of the sweet kind that Hardy is refreshing. He tends to restore the balance.

Ask any man, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, how life has gone with him, and, if he is honest, he will tell you that life did not go definitely one way or the other. Things sometimes came out well and sometimes not. Hardy is biased in favor of the things that do not come out well. "Life's Little Ironies" is a good title, but it is a title that implies a thesis, an attitude from which humanity is surveyed. The stories are perfection and they sound true. Hardy is a logician and he will back any tale of his with evidence, even the first story in "Wessex Tales," in the preface of which the authority of physicians is invoked. But when you take all his stories together you find nine failures out of ten human careers, and life has a better batting average than that. No one doubts that the "Fellowtownsmen" got into such horrid confusion, that things happened as they shouldn't, that every shot at happiness was a miss. And "The Waiting Supper" is so convincing that you cannot escape. But the two stories together, regarded for the moment not as the excellent works of art which they are, but as a view of human destiny, weaken each other. One convinces you. The two together make you ask questions about the author.

In "The Waiting Supper" there is one line that is as great a pathetic fallacy as the more familiar and cheery kind which represents nature as smiling upon the lovers. Hardy's lovers have to submit to this: "Thus the sad autumn afternoon waned, while the waterfall hissed sarcastically of the inevitableness of the unpleasant." Did you ever hear a waterfall like that? The only waterfalls I have heard quote Darwin and discuss the election returns. I know that the happy poet is a liar when he says that the nightingale is celebrating my love for Mamie, for the nightingale is concerned with other matters. But as between a nightingale who is sympathetic with my emotions and a sarcastic waterfall, I prefer the nightingale. And I do not like either in realistic fiction.

Thomas Hardy, the idol of the younger realists and the liberator of British fiction from the Victorian hoopskirt and the happy ending, is not a realist. He is a great romantic, with a taste for pretty girls, moonlight, heroes and dragoons. He is incurably superstitious. He is pained by many modern things, especially by modern restorations of ancient buildings. He takes Tess to the Druidical stones on Salisbury Plain because he dearly likes that kind of moonlit antiquity. His pronominal substitution of It for He does not achieve a revolution in theology. He manages the destinies of human folk as arbitrarily as any maker of fiction that ever lived. But he never made a story in which he did not convince you that life is overwhelmingly interesting and that nature, girls, and dragoons are beautiful if sad things to contemplate.

GEORGE BORROW

GEORGE BORROW.

ANY book about George Borrow is worth reading. The two volumes by Dr. Knapp are forbiddingly dense with documentary minutiæ, yet it is a pleasure to loaf through them at least once. Borrow's burly personality makes itself felt in the driest philological note and vitalizes the pages even of a commonplace critic, as, indeed, it vitalizes many flatly ordinary pages in his extraordinary books. Mr. Clement K. Shorter's "George Borrow and His Circle" is interesting because it is about Borrow and not in the least because it is by Mr. Shorter. Mr. Shorter's declared ambition was to write a book that should appeal not to "Borrovians," but to "a wider public which knows not Borrow."

Every book about the fighting scholar, every moderately competent article about him must invite new immigrants into Borrow's kingdom. But Mr. Shorter is not an introductory critic, not one who by his own skill and charm summons strangers to make the acquaintance of a great man. He is an inept critic who thrives by attaching his name to great reputations. Fancy a man of any trifling literary experience, with the least enthusiasm for literature, writing about style in a style like this: "Borrow, in common with many other great English authors whose work will live, was not uniformly a good stylist. He has many lamentable fallings away from the ideals of the stylist. But he will, by virtue of a wonderful individuality, outlive many a good stylist." It is a sin so to "style" in a chapter about Edward FitzGerald, who at the sound of such sentences would have clapped his hands to his ears.

Borrow describes himself in that pugnacious defence of Lavengro which forms the appendix to "The Romany Rye." "Though he may become religious, it is hardly to be expected that he will become a very precise and strait-laced person; it is probable that he will retain, with his scholarship, something of his gypsyism, his predilection for the hammer and tongs, and perhaps some inclination to put on certain gloves, not white kid, with any friend who may be inclined for a little old English diversion, and a readiness to take a glass of ale, with plenty of malt in it, and as little hop as may well be—ale at least two years old—with the aforesaid friend—when the diversion is over."

Is not that an irresistible man? Shouldn't you think that there would have been among his contemporaries two or three hundred thousand good sports, rooters, heelers, literary and non-literary bookmakers who would bet on him and back him in any enterprise in which his adventurous spirit elected to engage? Yet it was not so. He enjoyed only a short period of popularity after the publication of "The Bible in Spain." When he died at a ripe old age in 1881, he was not well known. During his life the only highly distinguished man of letters who knew and appreciated him was FitzGerald, the exquisite poet and critic—FitzGerald, whose literary habits were as distant as possible from Borrow's, whose fine-edged rapier seems utterly alien to Borrow's short arm jab or his overhand wallop. FitzGerald had a curious accuracy in spotting what was worth while in his time and in dodging certain celebrated things that other people thought worth while, and there is nothing inconsistent in his knowing that Borrow wrote good English. But looking over Borrow's shoulder at his contemporaries, and remembering Borrow's ungainly verses, one is amused to find that the only real literary man facing one with a wink in his eye is FitzGerald. The others have their backs turned.

Consider also Borrow's posthumous fame. His first biographer is Dr. Knapp, an American professor of philology. And the modern critics who praise him are not open-air men, but bookish, library men, whose names do not suggest the robustly adventurous, Lionel Johnson, Mr. Watts-Dunton, Mr. Birrell, Mr. Seccombe.

Most literary critics praise him in terms laudatory enough to atone for the sins of their professional predecessors, whom Borrow held up to "show the creatures wriggling, blood and foam streaming from their broken jaws." His four important books are published in Everyman's Library; Mr. Birrell says that "we are all Borrovians now"; within twenty years have appeared three biographical studies, besides Mr. Shorter's. Yet Dr. Knapp's fundamental biography which was published in 1898 is out of print; that mysterious and reprehensible entity known as the public has not demanded a new edition. It is all consistent with the Borrovian inconsistency. Borrow was proud of being a gentleman and a scholar, and he was both in all true senses of the words; but he hated gentility and wrote a hammer-and-tongs chapter against the genteel; no revolutionist despising the "bourgeois" ever punched their smug faces with such violent verbal fisticuffs.

He boasts of his fondness for gypsies and prize-fighters and quite simply asks, "If he had not associated with prize-fighters, how could he have used his fists?" However, he is an aristocrat and has no sympathy with radical weavers. Despite his hatred of cant, some sentences in "The Bible in Spain" have a missionary twang. He drifts naturally away from the Church of England, yet when he attacks other ecclesiastical institutions he holds up the Church of England as the exemplar of religious truth. He scorns all deviation from fact, yet his biographers have not wholly succeeded in separating what he did from what he invented.

He was undoubtedly a polyglot, he made metrical translations from thirty languages, wrote a version of the Gospel of St. Luke in Spanish Gypsy (the first book ever attempted in any Gypsy dialect), supervised the printing of the Bible in Manchu-Tartar, made translations from the English into Manchu-Tartar, Russian and Turkish in good style, as any of us who has read them can testify. In the person of Lavengro he lost the stalwart Isopel Berners because he insisted on giving her lessons in Armenian! For all that, he made mistakes and so gave the scholars evidence that he was no scholar. He was not. He had an instinct for language, especially for that language which he knew, as we know it, probably better than he knew Manchu-Tartar. In his English narratives we can follow him and praise him or censure him without violating the severe rule which he laid down: "Critics, when they review books, ought to have a competent knowledge of the subjects which those books discuss."

The four books of Borrow which belong to English literature are "The Bible in Spain," "Lavengro," "The Romany Rye" and "Wild Wales." "The Bible in Spain" is one of those books that grow out of circumstances; it was to a large extent thought out and phrased on the scene, amid the adventures which it narrates; later it was cast into book form. It grew out of experience, but an artist shaped its growth. Borrow was sent by the Bible Society to distribute Spanish versions of the Bible. He encountered the opposition of allied church and government, was arrested, put in prison for three weeks, and liberated through the influence of British officials.

It is not, however, the Bible or his mission that stimulates Borrow's imagination. Cities and people, meetings on the road, scraps of talk, sometimes rather long conversations, monologues by Borrow, the mischances, dangers and excitements of a country at once wild and anciently civilized, Borrow's opinions about languages, characters, landscapes and anything else under the Spanish skies—such is the substance of the book; and the substance is transmitted through a style that gives little heed to elegance, that walks along like a healthy man on a tramp. The most eccentric of men, full of strange languages and odd ideas, Borrow writes English as naturally as he drinks English ale. There is not a touch of eloquence, not a great phrase; his descriptions are rather literal records of what was in front of him and how he liked it than "word-paintings." The dominant writers of his time were super-eloquent. Borrow does not speak their language. Perhaps that is why he did not rival them in popular favor, and also why he seems to us so refreshingly downright.

Borrow, like his master Defoe, has the art of setting all things forth as if they were matters of fact. Even when his characters talk of unusual matters, nay, especially when they harangue and gossip about queer things, their conversation sounds like a transcription from life and not like invention.

"Lavengro" and its sequel, "The Romany Rye," are properly classified in Everyman's Library under fiction, and "The Bible in Spain" is classified as "Travel and Topography." In what proportion autobiography and fiction are admixed is a question which does not effect the merits of the books. They all follow about the same method, and so, too, does "Wild Wales." The episodes are inconsequential, and the looseness of organization not only permits Borrow unlimited latitude of subject, but strengthens the Defoe-like illusion of truth; he never loses the tone of the veracious chronicler who puts things down in the order of nature and not according to the design of art. Between adventures and more or less pertinently to them, Borrow becomes itinerant schoolmaster and gives us instruction in language, philology, comparative literature, ethics and religion. He is not a pedant, but a humanist: "It has been said, I believe, that the more languages a man speaks, the more a man he is; which is very true, provided he acquires languages as a medium for becoming acquainted with the thoughts and feelings of the various sections into which the human race is divided; but in that case he should rather be termed a philosopher than a philologist."

Borrow need not be read continuously; if he enters upon a discourse that promises not to interest you, you can turn the pages rapidly until the eye strikes something more attractive. In his wide variety is something for everybody. The conversations with the old apple woman who had read the story of "Blessed Mary Flanders"; the chapters on pugilism; the talks with tinkers and publicans; the old man who knew Chinese but could not tell time by the clock; the outrageous attack upon Walter Scott; the theological arguments with the man in black—these are some of the choice fragments of what Borrow was pleased to call a "dream." The general atmosphere is less that of dreamland than of the broad highway in full sunlight. Since Borrow died the cult of the open air has increased, and to that as much as to anything is due the revival of interest in him. He is a great person, a colossal egotist who in his journeyings takes up the whole road. It is healthy for a man to be an egotist—especially if he is a colossal one.

SHELLEY

SHELLEY.

In his "Defence of Poetry" Shelley says that the imagination is the moral instrument. To be greatly good a man must imagine intensely and comprehensively. Poetry serves morality not by what is explicitly teaches, but by its power to awaken and enlarge the mind, to render it "the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought." Since poetry strengthens the imagination, which is the organ of the moral nature of man, "a poet would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his time and place, in his poetical creations which participate in neither." A remarkable book could be made of the best things said in prose by English poets about poetry. Perhaps one book would not hold so much. A narrower yet great and imaginative book could be made of what Shelley said about poetry and what English poets have said about him. Such a book would explain and exhibit the theory of poetry and the art of criticism. The very good edition of Shelley in the Regent Library, (edited by Roger Ingpen) contains some brief "Testimonia" which invite one to the essays from which they are taken, by Browning, Swinburne, Francis Thompson.

It is significant that Mr. Ingpen has not quoted from Arnold. If it is the function of poetry to expand the imagination and make the mind aware of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought, how did it happen that Arnold, a genuine poet, missed Shelley utterly? Arnold was not satisfied with his essay and intended to return to the subject. That he could do a better thing is proved by his essay on Keats, which, after he has done with his droning, schoolmasterly defence of Keats's morals, is eloquent, serene and restrainedly emotional. Shelley phrased many of the revolutionary ideas that were current in his time. Arnold's timid school-bred culture was impervious to any sort of revolutionary idea. Shelley's ideas did not impress him; he thought Shelley a wonderful singer, but a singer without a solid body of thought. Now, Shelley was the most full-minded poet of his time. He knew more about what ought to be done with the world than any of his contemporaries. That he failed to free Ireland and that the French revolution was a disaster are a reflection on other people's intelligence, not on his. It is not at all derogatory to a man's ideas that for centuries and centuries after him the world fails to come up to his teachings. If an angel is ineffectual that is not the angel's fault. Indeed a too readily effectual angel would be rather a journalist than a seer.

That the bulk of mankind is ages behind the best of its poets and seers might possibly be explained by the fact that the bulk of mankind simply has not met their thoughts. But how shall one explain the fact that artistic children of culture, who have had opportunity to read, who respond to the beauty of seers and poets, remain at the tail of the intellectual procession, are not abreast of long dead poets like Shelley, and let the leaders of their own day sweep past them unapprehended, unguessed? The thing that makes one impatient of the privilege of culture is that many of those who have enjoyed it do not lead; they drag mankind back. In "Winds of Doctrine," by Mr. George Santayana, the mind of the present age is likened to "a philosopher at sea who, to make himself useful, should blow into the sail." When you make a generality about the mind of today, you are perfectly safe, for nobody can dispute you. Nobody knows what the mind of today is doing. It is doing so many things that no one of us can keep track of it. But when a man writes himself down in a book, you can tell what his mind is doing—in that book. I should liken Mr. Santayana to a philosopher who, really wanting to sail, had forgot to cast off and was still lashed to the dock with a spanking wind blowing out to sea.

It is no wonder that Whitman, revolutionary in substance and form, perplexes the genteel and the cloistered. But it is a wonder that Shelley, whose form is classic and whom a century has transformed from demon to angel, does not reach them. A striking example of critical and philosophic blindness is Mr. Santayana's essay on Shelley. Mr. Santayana is a poet, and in this essay he says beautiful poetic things. He is not stupid as Arnold was, for once in his life. But he misses Shelley. He understands what Shelley was related to before Shelley, for example, Plato, but he does not know the relation of Shelley to his time or to the world since Shelley. What Mr. Santayana says is lucid in phrase but quite hopelessly confused in thought. He says that Shelley was "a finished child of nature, not a joint product, like most of us, of nature, history and society." That is not true of Shelley or any other human being in recorded history. It is worse biography than Dowden's, and it seems that so old a critic as Taine might have saved a man from writing such nonsense in the year 1912. Mr. Santayana says that "Shelley was not left standing aghast, like a Philistine, before the destruction of the traditional order." That is naïve. Of course Shelley was not left standing aghast; he was trying his best to destroy the traditional order; he was butting his beautiful head against it. He did not budge the traditional order. One reason is that most people have impoverished imaginations, that the world can't do what Tolstoy thought would save it, stop and think for five minutes. Another little reason is that there are too many conservatives like Mr. Santayana teaching the young men of the world. Yet Mr. Santayana says that Shelley was "unteachable"!

Shelley believed that a man would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong in his poetry. Yet every man, poet or not, who writes at all and is not a hypocrite, embodies his conceptions of right and wrong in all his utterances. Shelley was intensely personal in his poetry. His sky-larking, star-sweeping way of expressing himself takes us out of range of his individual opinions. He spoke heart-near things in splendid distances and tried to pull the far skies down into sodden British hearts. The revolt, the defeated revolt of his own times, near to him as the news of the daily papers, he allegorized as the rebellion of a mythological Islam, and he flung the stars reeling through Spenserian stanzas. No essayist has risen fully to

Shelley's poetic stature and comprehended him except another great poet, Francis Thompson. Speaking his own convictions, as every man, poet, critic, or even an academic voice of reason must and should speak his convictions, Thompson begins his essay by pleading for a reunion between his church and the art of poetry. So much of his essay seems to me interesting but not closely relevant to Shelley. After this introduction Thompson soars into the greatest essay that has ever been written on an English poet by an English poet.

Most poets, with their wonderful ears, of course write good prose. Francis Thompson has a fine essay on the prose of poets. Even Browning, who wrote little prose except the extraordinary parenthetical letters, was so clarified by Shelley that in his essay he discovered a fairly fluent and readable style.

Shelley is primarily neither philosopher nor revolutionist, but lyric poet. Yet to treat him only as a lyric poet is to forget his great drama, "The Cenci," which can hold up its head undiminished beside the Elizabethans. That idiotic British officialdom does not, or did not at last accounts, allow its performance on the regular stage, is perhaps only one more proof of how little impression Shelley's austere anarchism made on practical British morality. "The

Cenci" is austere; for Shelley, it is athletically economical. The last speech of Beatrice is an unexcelled emotional climax. Yet even in this play we find that "intensely personal" note of Shelley; it speaks all his heart against all injustice. The play learned many lessons from the Elizabethans. It is not far wrong to call these lines Shakespearean:

> My wife and children sleep;
> They are now living in unmeaning dreams;
> But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
> Be just which was most necessary. O,
> Thou replenished lamp! whose narrow fire
> Is shaken by the wind and on whose edge
> Devouring darkness hovers!

H. G. WELLS AND UTOPIA

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Utopias fall into two classes, the local and the chronological. That is, some are removed from present fact by geographical transition to a country apart from us in space, a magic island, a realm undiscovered until the romancer found it and assumed it to be extant in the romancer's year of grace; others are sundered from present fact by being thrown forward into the future or backward into a time that precedes recorded history. The desirable land within the limits of present time and the known surficial limits of the globe is obviously not convincing. One fears that it may be rediscovered and invaded by an imperial fleet or an inquisitive scientific expedition. Crusoe's island is no longer remote. The geographers have plotted the planet and have snared every conceivable no-man's-land in the meshes of realistic lines of latitude and longitude.

The ideal civilization which plays ducks and drakes, not with space, but with time, is safer. Nothing can dislodge it or disprove it or in any wise proceed against it—except by force of superior imagination. For nobody knows what may happen in the future. That is why all the theological heavens are sublimely ramparted against attack.

Bellamy placed his ideal civilization within the impregnable security of a time as yet unborn. His conception was original and in its way was more realistic than the timeless abstraction of Plato and More, and the Nowhere from which Morris sent news. The fundamental scheme of portraying a future upon this earth was so fascinating that Bellamy's book enjoyed a success out of all proportion to its literary skill or its sociological insight. He had a first-rate plan, but with what unfanciful and rigidly precise lines he filled it in! His style is stiff and his future is ossified.

Mr. H. G. Wells took the idea of describing an imagined tomorrow and made of it a stimulating romance. In saying that he took the idea one does not mean to imply that he borrowed the scheme of "Looking Backward" or of any other book. The notion of criticizing today from the height of a postulated tomorrow was probably born and raised before Bellamy. My bibliography is imperfect, but I seem to remember that an Assyrian conceived the notion and inscribed his reflections on a ton of brick. The important thing is the kind of future a man imagines and the way he gets there and the justice of his backlook on the world as it is. Wells's "The World Set Free" is the most vision-expanding book of its kind—if there be a kind—that I have ever quarrelled with and been delighted by. It justifies the last word of its title. It does not cramp the growth of the race between a set of rules. It spreads the lines of development out at a generously wide angle. It bids humanity spring from what it is. It makes no desperately impossible demands upon our common nature. Indeed, with a cunning hidden plea, not evident at first glance, Mr. Wells draws the world council, which gathered together the shattered nations and gave them the first good government they had ever known, as a collection of ordinary men, with only one or two inspiring geniuses. The idea—a very important idea—is that any of us duffers could do it if we had to, and if we were only jolted out of a few little private interests and superstitions.

The value of a Utopia is not so much the description of a desirable and convincingly attainable state as in the reflex description of an undesirable state—the state in which we live. To show how the "new civilization" was unhampered by political intrigue and financial considerations is to show how obstructive is the present system of politics and ownership. "Man the warrior, man the lawyer, and all the bickering aspects of life, pass into obscurity; the grave dreamers, man the curious learner and man the creative artist, come forward to replace these barbaric aspects of existence by a less ignoble adventure." In "those" times, that is the present seen from the year 2000, many of the homes were entirely "horrible, uniform, square, squat, ugly, hideously proportioned, uncomfortable, dingy, and in some respects quite filthy; only people in complete despair of anything better could have lived in them." In "our" time, that is about 2000, the last stupid capitalist who wanted millions for an invention he had stolen was laughed out of court. People do not struggle to get, because they do not run the risk of starvation and wage slavery; they produce as artists, because man likes to do things with his head and his hands. In our times we understand that Bismarck, to take a salient example, was not an admirable man but a gross person, and that the age that produced him, made him a ruler, and paid him respect, was a dull, stupefied, vicious age. The time when people were taking pills for all kinds of ailments, were being killed by the slow process of the slum or the swift process of the ill-managed railroads, is past the imagination of "our" time to conceive.

From such a past the world is set free. The people of that past day might have set themselves free, but they were too stupid; the workmen were debased, timid and without imagination, the capitalists had to be intent on property and dividends lest they fall to the unpropertied condition of workmen; lawyers, clergymen, popular novelists like Mr. Wells, editors, journalists, and other professional parasites did not dare utter even such vision as they had, or did it for money under convenient restrictions. It was an unthinkably rotten period in the history of the world. Only a few kickers knew how rotten it was, or had courage to express their sense of the prevalent putrescence.

The account of what used to be is just enough, and the account of what "is" does not strain the intelligence even of one who sees things from the point of view of 1914. The only unconvincing part of Mr. Wells's history is that which narrates how we ceased to be what we were and became what we are. He wipes the old world out with an atomic bomb, so destructive that it annihilates all the capitals of the earth, makes war impossible and compels mankind to federate. Mr. Wells has a penchant for "fishy" science. He knows a good deal about chemistry, biology, mechanics, and he knows that novel readers know less, as a rule, than he knows. So with the finest air of conviction he shatters the world with a new explosive, which has a kind of laboratory-veracity not claimed for the comet whose tail brushed us to revolution in an earlier of his engaging romances. The clever man secures plausibility by rather cheekily dedicating the book to "Frederick Soddy's interpretation of radium," to which this story "owes long passages." Neat, isn't it? It inspires in the ignorant reader a confidence that those atomic bombs are approved by the most advanced science—though, of course, Mr. Wells does not say so. The cataclysmic revolution is splendidly narrated, and is even better than Mr. Wells's earlier mechanical and astronomical romances. The trouble with it is that it is not a fitting transition from a state of society which is seriously conceived to a better state of society which is described with all the earnestness of a sociologist. The two things are discordant. If we are to be taken from one civilization to another we must move along a social highway. The atomic bombs are out of key with the prelude and the last two chapters.

Mr. Wells is fond of mixing fake chemistry and social reality. He has succeeded in two kinds of fiction, which he should keep distinct, the Jules Verne romance and the novel of present-day life. He persists in putting the two in the same book, and they simply will not blend even under his skilful stirring-spoon. In "Tono-

Bungay" he gave us a good picture of a quack millionaire, full of the spirit of the living age. It was set in a realistic scene and was true to life. Then for no reason at all he sent his hero in search of a mysterious metal called "quap," which does not exist and so never burnt the bottom out of the ship. "Quap" destroys the illusion of the book. About the time that quap begins to do its work, the book ceases to be a novel. "Marriage" almost ceases to be a novel when the couple go to Labrador. The introduction of love business into the comet story is an impertinence, as Mr. Bernard Shaw has complained. Mr. Wells's incurable taste for romantic adventure on a plane removed from life—usually an aeroplane that does what no aeroplane has done yet—vitiates his realism; and his concessions to the "love interest" do not help his experiments in scientific "futurism." He is best when he keeps separate the two sides of his genius.

On the other hand, his extraordinary skill in feathering social truth with romance, and his equally extraordinary skill in making a monster of romance eat real hay are the virtues of his vices. His tracts read like novels, and his novels often carry shrewdly concealed tracts. He is, next to Bernard Shaw, the most irritating and the most widely read revolutionary economist who writes our language. Like Mr. Shaw, he is a rather tame revolutionist; he has never got free from the middle-class, emancipated clerk view of life, and his romantic sense sometimes corrupts his sense of social fact as it does his sense of scientific fact. But he always thinks in ambush behind his most trivial narrative. And when he comes forth avowedly as a thinker and theorist, he has the vivacity of phrase, the sparkle of manner which serve him when he is making fiction. Moreover, in spite of his intense modernity and his contempt for ancient elegancies and traditional beauties, he can write fine, rhythmic, luminously visual prose; like all imaginative men who deal in words, he is a bit of a poet. His account of "the last war" has in it something of the quality of the epic: "Men rode upon the whirlwind that night and slew and fell like archangels. The sky rained heroes upon the astonished earth. Surely the last fights of mankind were the best. What was the heavy pounding of Homeric swordsmen, what was the creaking charge of chariots, beside this swift rush, this crash, this giddy triumph, this headlong swoop to death?"

JOHN MASEFIELD

JOHN MASEFIELD.

THE first version of Mr. Masefield's "Pompey the Great" was published before "The Everlasting Mercy" and "The Widow of the Bye Street," those virile narratives that made us wake to find him famous. "Pompey" is vigorous and dramatic, yet it lacks the note that announces a new poet. The earlier poems, "Salt Water Ballads" are good, but do not rise above the chorus of minor lyrists. The short stories in "A Mainsail Haul" do not distinguish Masefield from a score of sturdy spinners of sea yarns. It was "The Widow in the Bye Street" that told us that a great new ship was in port. After that splendid arrival came "The Daffodil Fields" and "Dauber." Meanwhile the man who had found, if not created, a form of poetry so individual as to invite the final tribute of parody, showed himself in "The Tragedy of Nan," master of dramatic realism.

It is likely and logical, even if the dates do not fall into line, that "Pompey" is the work of a young ambitious literary man who in the hour of conceiving the work had not yet discovered his course. He had to a large extent discovered his style and his attitude toward life and the speech of men. He makes the Romans talk in a sharp bold staccato, which is good English and excellent Masefield; as for its Latinity, well, the Romans are dead and we do not know just how they talked. Pompey says: "We were happy there, that year." Cornelia answers: "Very happy. And that day the doves came, picking the spilled grain. And at night there was a moon." Pompey's next speech is: "All the quiet valley. And the owls were calling. Those little grey owls. Make eight bells, captain."

It is a question whether a modern dramatist is not misdirecting his genius when he makes plays of Greek or Roman legends and characters. To be sure, a man of genius is not to be limited in his subjects or his style. He is free by virtue of his genius. He may make an Iliad if it pleases him to try it. Mr. Bernard Shaw put a new wrinkle in the stiffened parchment of Caesar's biography. Ibsen at the age of 43, after he had hit upon his "later" manner, that is after he had made the simple discovery that universal tragedy grins in the small houses of small people in small Norwegian towns, produced his "Julian the Apostate." Poets of all nations during the last three hundred years have retold Greek and Roman stories and made new poetry of them. But on the whole the Greeks and Romans handled their own subjects, their own lives and legends fairly well. The task of the modern is to render our times or to interpret timeless and spaceless subjects from our point of view. The widow who lived in the bye street and the painter who was killed at sea are not as important persons as the Hon. Cneius Pompeius Magnus, but Mr. Masefield's poems about living (or recently killed) obscure folk are more important than his drama about the ancient illustrious dead.

"Pompey" is a good play, that is, it is good to read; I do not know whether it has been acted. It has one characteristic of Mr. Masefield's other work, a direct incisive speech, poetry of the naked fact, the brief metaphor which might come out in any man's talk and which has the "unliterary" flavor of reality—a cunningly literary mode of writing. Mr. Masefield makes Pompey say: "Five minutes ago I had Rome's future in my hand. She was wax to my seal. I was going to free her. Now is the time to free her. You can tear the scales and the chains from her." Did the Romans talk in this clipped hurried fashion? Probably they did when they were excited, for it is human to talk in short sentences; even Germans do it.

The business of the dramatist is to make you believe, with an arrested compelled attention, in the speech and action of persons in clearly defined circumstances. It makes no great difference whether the scene is in a Norwegian house or on the necromantic island of Shakespeare's "Tempest." Sometimes it seems a more wonderful achievement to make the Norwegian house interesting because it is so terribly like the one we live in. Mr. Masefield's Nan seems to me worth ten of Mr. Masefield's Cornelias, and the peculiar style and habit of thought of Mr. Masefield seem more fitted to the modern subject. One of his metrically ingenious stanzas, with all the artifice of meter and rhyme, is nearer to life than his vivaciously realistic sentences put into the mouth of a Roman. "Back your port oars. Shove off. Give way together. Go on there. Man your halliards. Take the turns off. Stretch it along. Softly now. Stand by." Was such the dialect of Roman sea captains? Nobody knows. All that I argue is that Mr. Masefield's punching abruptness is more wonderfully real, more effective on the lips of modern people whom we do know.

> O God, O God, what pretty ways she had.
> He's kissing all her skin, so soft and white.
> She's kissing back. I think I'm going mad.
> Like rutting rattens in the apple loft.
> She held that light she carried high aloft
> Full in my eyes for him to hit me by,
> I had the light all dazzling in my eye.

Every poet is limited to his idiom, and though he may make broad differentiations, may change his structural form from sonnet to ode, from ode to dramatic scene, may adapt his style to a character to the extent of making clown and king unlike in their turn of phrase, yet when he is earnestly poetic he writes his own kind of poetry. Mr. Masefield vocalizes Masefield sentences with the breath of Romans. So Browning's characters all have the Browning abundance of telescoped metaphor. Shakespeare's English kings and Italian dukes trumpet Elizabethan blank verse. The identity of flavor and idiom and of metaphor between Shakespeare's English characters and Roman characters and Italian characters will never be perceived by the male and female Mrs. Jamesons, who write essays about Shakespeare's "characters," but cannot hear verse. To be sure, Shakespeare and all other great dramatists make the persons of the play adapt their substance to the situation; naturally Othello in a jealous fit does not talk about having lost his ducats and his daughter or order a cup of sack. But within the specific situation and the rather loose limits of character Shakespeare equips his person with a style of blank verse that is primarily Elizabethan, secondarily Shakespearean, and only in a tertiary and wholly subordinate sense Caesarean or Macbethean. D'Annunzio writes magnificent D'Annunzio, with a recognizable fondness for certain words and sonorities, no matter who is alleged to be talking. A poet is at his best when his singular power of phrase and his substance are most happily fused.

Masefield's instrument plays best upon modern themes, upon the tragedy of obscure people in English fields or upon the seven seas. It is his distinction to have taken the lives of the humble and to have involved those lives in the revolution of the stars and the expanses of sea. He has lifted coarse words into literature (the Elizabethans did that, too); he has related the large elements to little elemental lives; he has elevated obvious simplicities to grand complexities.

The resemblance between the austerely tender pathos of "The Daffodil Fields" and Wordsworth's "Michael" is a genuine resemblance honorable to the younger poet; and the pointing to the resemblance is not, I trust, an example of the critic's weak habit of referring one poet back to another. Mr. Quiller-Couch has said that "neither in the telling did, or could, 'Enoch Arden' come near the artistic truth of 'The Daffodil Fields'." Now, if one is to compare poets, for the sake of praising them or for the better understanding of them, it is well to make comparisons that refer the new and unknown to the known in illuminating conjunction. To say that "Enoch Arden" does not approach the artistic truth of "The Daffodil Fields" is to make an inept comparison, to associate the weak with the strong, even though the comparison is negative. "Enoch Arden" is the flimsiest kind of romantic fraud in Tennyson's worst manner. It is a sob poem that sends only the tiniest lace handkerchiefs to the laundry. "The Daffodil Fields," for all its conscious artistry and the adroit manipulation of the verses, is terrifically sincere. If its substance has any allegiance to another English poet, we must look for a poet who had a realistic sense of the furrowed field and a visionary sense of the stars, that is Wordsworth. And if one's odious liking for comparison is not satisfied with that, one may ask readers of poetry to compare the opening stanza of "The Widow in the Bye Street" with Chaucer, and think of such merits as plainness of phrase, simplicity and ease of narrative, and soundness of verse structure.

> Down Bye street, in a little Shropshire town,
> There lived a widow with her only son:
> She had no wealth nor title to renown,
> Nor any joyous hours, never one.

Is there not here a note that suggests the opening of "The Nonne Preestes Tale," even though the story which follows is quite unlike Chaucer's? Or is it only the "widow" that makes me associate the two? At any rate it is pleasant to think that Mr. Masefield in a strong, not an imitative or servile, sense, is heir to the oldest master of English narrative verse.

Then if our habit of judging new poets by old ones still dominates us, let us take any passage describing the sea in "Dauber" and put it beside any of the thousand years of English sea poetry.

> Denser it grew, until the ship was lost.
> The elemental hid her; she was merged
> In mufflings of dark death, like a man's ghost,
> New to the change of death, yet hither urged.
> Then from the hidden waters something surged——
> Mournful, despairing, great, greater than speech,
> A noise like one slow wave on a still beach.

After that, if only for the pleasure of quoting them, recall Swinburne's lines:

> Where beyond the extreme sea-wall and between the remote sea-gates,
> Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits.

The wonder of our English tongue is never more resounding than when English poets echo the tumult of the sea. Mr. Masefield is not so much an innovator as an initiate into a great poetic tradition, the tradition of a race of sailors and chantey-makers who began with "The Seafarer" or long before that, and shall not end with "Dauber." The sea is in Masefield's blood and in his personal experience. Who but an English poet would have ended "The Tragedy of Pompey the Great" with a chantey to the tune of "Hanging Johnny"?

SHAKESPEARE AND THE SCRIBES

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In his sensible little book, "Literary Taste: How to Form It," Mr. Arnold Bennett says: "In attending a university extension lecture on the sources of Shakespeare's plots, or in studying the researches of George Saintsbury into the origins of English prosody, or in weighing the evidence for and against the assertion that Rousseau was a scoundrel, one is apt to forget what literature really is and is for."

Of the vast library of scholarly research, the most fatuous section, if one is to judge from the few specimens one happens to have seen, is that which deals with the most important division of literature—poetry; and probably the poet who has suffered the most voluminous maltreatment from two centuries of English, German and American scholarship is Shakespeare. I have been going in an idle way over the notes in "The Tragedie of Jvlivs Caesar," edited by Horace Howard Furness, Jr., and "The Tragedie of Cymbeline," edited by the elder Dr. Furness. And I have looked into other volumes of this laborious work, "A New Varorium Edition of Shakespeare." From an enormous mass of commentary, criticism, word-worrying, text-marring and learned guesswork, the editor has chosen what seem to him the best notes. The sanity of his introductions and the good sense of some of his own notes lead one to suppose that he has selected with discrimination from the notes of others. His work is a model of patience, industry and judgment. He plays well in this game of scholarship. But what is the game worth? What is the result?

Here is a volume of nearly 500 large pages containing only one play! The text is a literal reprint of the first folio, or whatever is supposed to be the earliest printed version. The clear stream of poetry runs along the tops of the pages. Under that is a deposit of textual emendations full of clam-shells and lost anchors and tin cans. Under that is a mud bottom two centuries deep. It consists of (a) what scholars said Shakespeare said; (b) what scholars said Shakespeare meant; (c) what scholars said about what other scholars said; (d) what scholars said about the morality and character of the personages, as (1) they are in Shakespeare's play, and as (2) they are in other historical and fictitious writings; (e) what scholars said about how other people used the words that Shakespeare used; (f) what scholars said could be done to Shakespeare's text to make him a better poet. I have not read all these notes and I never shall read them. Life is too short and too interesting.

All the time that I was trying to read the notes, so that I could know enough about them to write this article, my mind kept swimming up out of the mud into that clear river of text. It is an almost perfectly clear river. Some of the obscurities that scholars say are there are simply not obscure, except as poetry ought to have a kind of obscurity in some turbulent passages. Many of the obscurities the scholars put there in their innocence and stupidity, and those obscurities you can eliminate by ignoring them.

The really valuable note is the etymological. Etymology reveals the essential metaphors of words. The modern reader will find that beyond his intellectual front door stand three or four wire entanglements of connotation; by the time a word gets to him it is bruised and ragged. The etymologist clears all those fences for you and delivers a word fresh into your hands. He shows you how other poets have used it. He enriches it with other connotations. He shows it to be even wealthier than it was in the mind of the man who wrote the Shakespearian line. One of the most exciting and poetic books is the Oxford Dictionary. The dated illustrative history of a word, past milestone after milestone of use, is an intellectual epic. The word is rootdeep and branch-high with poetry, with the imaginative habits of the race. The etymological note not only clarifies Shakespeare, but spreads behind him (and other poets) a sort of verbal-cosmic background. Etymology brightens the color of words, deepens their significance. That the etymologist is often a duffer, who, in the very act of resolving a word into new chords, writes stiff and stodgy prose, is a perplexing thing in human nature and a very perplexing problem in that appalling institution, Scholarship.

It is impossible for even a vivacious, humorous man like Dr. Furness, an enthusiastic amateur in love with his task, to live in a library of Shakespearian scholarship and not be infected by its diseases. Dr. Furness knows, for example, precisely when "Cymbeline" was written. Shakespeare was forty-six years old. Now, "Cymbeline" is a foolish play; Dr. Johnson said so. And there must be a reason for Shakespeare's deterioration, for Shakespeare, unlike other poets, is not to be allowed to write bad plays and bad lines without a satisfactory explanation. He did not explain himself, but the scholars come to his rescue. Dr. Furness fancies that, though forty-six is not an advanced age, Shakespeare was tired and disillusioned. "There may have crept into Shakespeare's study of imagination a certain weariness of soul in contemplating in review the vast throng of his dream children. . . . A sufficing harvest of fame is his and honest wealth, accompanied by honor, love, obedience and troops of friends." "I can most reverently fancy that he is once more allured by the joy of creation when by chance there falls in his way the old, old story of a husband convinced, through villany, of his wife's infidelity."

And there you are. Shakespeare at the age of forty-six is lured by the restless joy of creation into writing "Cymbeline," which is a poor play. It is not up to the mark which Shakespeare's previous masterpieces have set. There is something a little wobbly about this conjunction of surmises. But the scholar is never at a loss. He can deliver immortal Will from his own errors, shield him from the consequences of being at once a god in art and a human man, prone to literary lapses and slovenly work. The masque in the fifth act "is regarded by a large majority of editors and critics as an intrusive insertion by some hand not Shakespeare's." When a large majority of scholars and critics regard a thing as so, it is so. It gets into the books that you have to read to pass college examinations. And if you say that many of the scholars and critics whom you happen to have read or listened to are chumps, when they deal with Shakespeare or any other poet, you are a lost soul.

Some of the notes of the various commentators are suggestive. But many of the notes are sheer impertinences, especially those that attempt to mend the lines.

> I would haue left it on the Boord, so soone
> As I had made my Meale; and parted
> With Pray'rs for the Prouider.

There is nothing the matter with that. It sounds all right. But the editors have to fill out the short second line, to make it scan. Dr. Furness thinks, justly, that the line needs only "a very timid pause after 'Meale.'" Of course, any reader, any good actor, with an ear on the side of his head, reads all lines with pauses timid or bold as the case requires, and does not make a fuss about it. It is only the scholars that fuss, or poets like Pope, who are entirely out of touch with Shakespeare's free metrical habits.

It is almost inconceivable that grown men with enough interest in poetry to spend their whole lives in Shakespeare's company could have daubed him with such muddy nonsense as one finds in these notes, which are not the worst of scholarly comment but the best, selected by a discriminating man. What a colossal sham it all is!—erected not by charlatans but by men working in good faith and with disinterested devotion to their task.

It is not merely the ignorant idler and the superficial player among books who has got tired of the institution of Shakespeare Improved: Fourteen Thousand Doctors of Philosophy in Session Day and Night, Searching for a Serum to Prevent Spinal Meningitis in the Lines of Shakespeare. Millions Needed to Continue This Humanitarian Work: Fifty Thousand Students Under Instruction in the Art of How Not to Be Poets. Against this amazing institution some of the more independent surgeons have protested. One was the late John Churton Collins, a physician who discovered that the Shakespearean metaphor was not a locally British infection rising from the Avon river, but was brought by the verbal mosquito from Rome and Greece. Collins had a vivid and audacious mind that made him one of the most readable of modern Shakespeareans, and he had, I assume, considerable learning. He says: "Dozens of impertinent emendations have been introduced into Shakespeare's text, because editors have not been aware that the custom of using the same word in different senses in one line, or even twice in contiguous lines, was deliberately affected by the Elizabethan poets." Deliberately affected? Yes, and it came natural to them in a time when language was a little looser and freer than it is after three centuries of increased use and hardened definition both in prose and poetry.

One trouble with much Shakespearean scholarship lies in the assumption that everything that left Shakespeare's hand must have been perfect. Why, he probably used words carelessly and did all kinds of tricks with them, as other geniuses do. Why should we assume that he always wrote a good line? Some of his lines are bad, and it is not necessary for Dr. Pumpernickell to knock out a couple of words or add a couple just to make a line go metrically. These scholars have a split vision. In one note they treat Shakespeare like a god who could not go wrong. In the next note they treat him like a sophomore versifier whose lines have to be corrected. Dr. Furness says that the earliest known text of "Julius Caesar"—that of the First Folio, "is markedly free from corruptions." What corruptions? The printers' or Shakespeare's? Dr. Furness lugs in that tiresome phantom, a playhouse copy. "Our only recourse is to accept the explanation given by Resch, viz., that these words between Brutus and Messala are an interpolation from a MS. addition which appeared first in a playhouse copy, and which, by mistake, became incorporated in the text." Now, is not that a "soft, downy, pink-cheeked peach of an idea" (Jonson's "Sejanus," act IV., sc. 13, 1, 23. Potter's edition: Oshkosh, Scholar and Sellum, 1913)? Resch be hanged! What playhouse copy? When? Whose mistake? How incorporated? A solid page and two-thirds of a page are devoted to explaining a difficulty which does not exist.

This is the true history of the passage in question. Shakespeare and Bacon and Raleigh met in the Mermaid Tavern for the purpose of turning out a few yards of Elizabethan blank verse in the post-Tennysonian style of Mr. Alfred Noyes. It was a very difficult job and Will of Stratford got roaring full. He went home on foot to Stratford, a long journey, and found Anne with another pair of twins, one of whom was the poet Davenant. This was very disturbing to Will. He did not know until after his death which twin was Davenant. He was then in that fateful year, 1599-1608, writing his play, "Julius Caesar," and making extensive use of Seutonius's "The Lives of the Caesars" (Dr. Furness thinks this doubtful, but if you are going to guess, why not guess good and plenty?). Anne got on Will's nerves and he had a bad morning head. That is why he made that slightly confused passage, which has bothered the scholars ever since.

The following example of how Shakespeare's biography is written is not a parody. It appears in the New York *Nation* of November

27, 1913, page 513, in a review of Arthur S. Pier's "Story of Harvard."

"Every good story has a prologue, and the story of Harvard has one which by no means should be left out. In Stratford-on-Avon stands the 'Old House in the High Street,' identified by the most eminent of our antiquaries, the late H. F. G. Waters, by certain documentary evidence, as the early home of Katharine Rogers, mother of John Harvard, from whom proceeded the little inheritance that first kindled in the western hemisphere the torch of a liberal culture. For this we have distinct contemporaneous chapter and verse.

"At circumstantial evidence we look askance, but without pressing the matter unduly this may be said—that the families of Rogers and Shakespeare lived in close neighborhood and intimacy at Stratford during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I.; that the poet knew Katharine Rogers well, as, on the other hand, he knew well Robert Harvard, at length her husband, in his shop at Southwark, in London, hard by the Globe Theatre. So far the conjunction would seem to be inevitable.

"Then looms up a possibility amounting perhaps to a likelihood, that no other than Shakespeare was the intermediary who brought together the Londoner and the fair, well-dowered maid in the remote midlands, that he was a familiar guest in the home in Southwark which he had helped to establish, and that he, the genial family friend, held on his knee the little John Harvard, the first-born in the household.

"Could this touch of their foster-father with the most illustrious name in literature be fairly established (and who can say after the feats of Mr. Waters what scraps may yet be found in the dust-heaps?), Harvard men would indeed have a tradition to prize."

Why not get down to brass tacks? We do not know much about Shakespeare's life. We do not know anything about his manuscripts, or the playhouse versions. We cannot even rely on the printed date of a quarto. We do not know whether a corrupt line was corrupted by Shakespeare or the printer or somebody else. Many emendations consist largely in a kind of scholarly punning. For example: Shakespeare wrote a line that every scholar remembers, for it is a causer of gray hairs and a prodigal spender of the midnight taper: "The blind Rush hath proclaimed his Bowells search." Johnson conjectures that four lines have been omitted. Steev. conj.: For "blind rush," read "mind rush." That is, the impetuousness of his thought makes one aware of how his instinct is struggling for the solution of his difficulties. Malone conj.:

"Bowells lurch." Evidently referring to the sea-sickness of Antony after the battle of Actium. Craik conj.: "Rowell's search, meaning that his blind rush, that is headlong rush, is caused or indicated by the speed of his horse into which he has thrust his rowels." Cf. B. Jonson, "Every man out of His Humor"; "One of the rowels catched hold of the ruffle of my boot." Oechelhauser (*Einleitung,* p. 1185): But this must refer to the speed of the intellect going through purely idealistic experiences. There is no question here of either sea or land. Macbeth has not been near the sea and Henry V. has not yet set sail for France. As for horses, it is now well established that there were no horses in England; otherwise why should Richard have cried, "My kingdom for a horse"? If there had been horses, one could surely have bought one, especially a King, for 80 marks, the then ruling price in Schleswig-Holstein; and even the ecstasies of expression would not have made appropriate the offer of an entire kingdom.

So they go "conjing" and "conjing" through desolate miles of notes. In spite of the fact that now and again a genuine bit of historic information, a light of interpretative intuition flashing from a scholar's note, does vivify and elucidate a puzzling line, or a line that you might pass over in an oblivious mood, nevertheless, is it not true that this whole institution of literary theology is a stupid superstition? There are plenty of unsolved problems in Shakespeare, fascinating questions of biography and interpretation to which conjectural answers are legitimate. But for illuminating answers, or partial answers, one has to go outside orthodox scholarship, to Walter Begley, to "The Shakespeare Problem Restated," by George C. Greenwood, to "Shakespeare's Mystery Play: A Study of The Tempest" by Colin Still, and to other heretical inquirers whom the pundits dismiss as cranks.

The scholars do not confine their thick-headed learning to old poets whose language is strange and who are made clearer by a note here and there. For some stranger reason scholars are hired to edit the modern poets in the popular series, those valuable and inexpensive reprints which help to spread poetry over the face of the earth and make it accessible to increasing numbers of readers. I pick up the "Selected Poems of Christina Rossetti," edited with introduction and notes by Charles Bell Burke, Ph. D., professor of English in the University of Tennessee. The volume is in Macmillan's Pocket Classics. I come upon "A Green Cornfield," a lovely lyric that must have made Shelley look down with interest "from the abode where the eternal are." There is reference to a note. I turn to it and find this: "An inverted simile? Consult Genung's 'Working Principles of Rhetoric,' p 79, 2, example." I will not consult Genung. I will advise all the pupils in my school never to consult Genung while they are reading poetry.

I commend to those hard-working young men and women in the universities who are now studying under editors of Shakespeare to fit themselves to be editors of Shakespeare these sentences from Mr. Max Eastman's "Enjoyment of Poetry": "A misfortune incident to all education is the fact that those who elect to be teachers are scholars. They esteem knowledge not for its use in attaining other values, but as a value in itself; and hence they put an undue emphasis upon what is formal and nice about it, leaving out what is less pleasing to the instinct for classification but more needful to the art of life. This misfortune is especially heavy in the study of literature. Indeed the very rare separation of the study of literature from that of the subjects it deals with suggests the barren and formal character of it. As usually taught for three years to postgraduates in our universities, it is not worth spending three weeks upon."

GEORGE MOORE AND OTHER IRISH WRITERS

GEORGE MOORE AND OTHER IRISH WRITERS.

"Though I may have lost the habit of reading," says Mr. Moore, "I have acquired, perhaps more than any other human being, another habit, the habit of thinking. I love my own thoughts." It must be a great pleasure to be Mr. George Moore, to have confidence in one's intellectual habits, to enjoy the memories and opinions that the mind excogitates, and to be able to phrase them with beautiful precision. The mind that honestly likes itself is sure to attract other minds and to interest even those that are antipathetic. If Mr. Moore does not persuade you that all his judgments are to be accepted, he provokes you to examine your own. He is stimulant, irritant, but there is no depressant reaction from him. One can stand a large dose of him, both of his exquisite fiction and of his repetitive reminiscences, which may or may not be fiction.

There is a remark ascribed to Lady Gregory: "Some men kiss and do not tell; George Moore does not kiss, but he tells." It is the business of the writer of fiction to "tell," and it makes little difference to the reader who reads for fun whether the gallant adventures are biographical or not. Early in his literary career Mr. Moore tried the confessional form of narrative and succeeded masterfully. The young man who "confessed" twenty-five years ago grew older, and in "Memoirs of My Dead Life" looked back upon his youth from the quiescence of middle age. Mr. Moore says that "if the reader of 'Vale' be wishful to know what happened at Orelay he can do so in a volume entitled 'Memoirs of My Dead Life,' but he need not read this novel to follow adequately the story of 'Vale.'" So the "Memoirs" is fiction. What, then, is "Hail and Farewell"? Simply an extension of the autobiographic novel, it includes real persons living and dead and calls them by their names, but it is as obviously a "made-up" book as anything in literature. It is the work of an artist and critic, the artist who gave us two masterpieces, "Esther Waters" and "Evelyn Innes," and the critic, who, apropos books and pictures, writes, if not with infallible judgment, ever with an unfailing sense of beauty.

Mr. Moore's lady-loves have not, according to his own testimony, direct and unconscious, been the most interesting affairs of his life. He writes better about Manet than about an amatory encounter of yesteryear. The women of his "regular" novels are more vivid than the women who perturb his mature reminiscences. He says that the critics complain that "instead of creating types of character like Esther Waters," he is wasting his time describing his friends, "mere portrait painting," and he asks an argumentative question: "In writing 'Esther Waters' did I not think of one heroic woman?"

For once the critics are on the right side. Lady Gregory is interesting in her own person and her own work, but Mr. Moore can never make her so interesting in a book as he has made Esther and Evelyn. And the ladies of his experience are more alive when he uses them as matter for fiction than when he sits behind a cigar dictating memories. That in creating Esther he was thinking of an heroic woman is his concern, not ours. His private kisses undoubtedly taught him something of the art of making fictitious kisses public; they furnished him, as such experiences furnish every author, with the story which as an artist he was to "tell." But his purely personal revelations are not startling. Ladies flit into his memory, receive the most delicate literary treatment and flit out again. Nothing unusual happens at Orelay or anywhere else, and what happens is handled finely, timidly even, with what may have been audacity in 1890, but no longer strikes us as valiantly candid. The introduction to "Memoirs of My Dead Life" now seems much ado over little; it is out of proportion and is a wobbly piece of thinking such as Mr. Moore's Irish born and French trained mind is seldom guilty of. The "Memoirs" and "Hail and Farewell" are to be enjoyed and admired. Even an Irishman ought not to find in them occasion for more than a contest of wit.

No page of "Hail and Farewell" is flat; no opinion of Mr. Moore's leaves you quite indifferent. The most interesting pages, more interesting than his portrait of himself as a lover in France or a member of the landed gentry of county Mayo, are those which criticize the personalities and the ideas of the so-called Celtic Revival. His comments on Lady Gregory and "Willie" Yeats just miss being insults. To say that "Lady Gregory has never been for me a very real person" is gratuitous and not quite consonant with that honesty which Mr. Moore advocates and for the most part practises. For in his portrait of her and his comments on her he shows that she is a very real person to him and a writer who compels his consideration. In the act of putting a pin through the humbuggery of others he buzzes himself.

However, his literary criticism of their work is delightful. Whether it is true or not we Yankees have no sure means of judging. He says that Lady Gregory's style which Mr. Yeats so highly values, the speech that she learned from the people and puts into the mouths of her characters, "consists of no more than a dozen turns of speech, dropped into pages of English so ordinary, that redeemed from these phrases it might appear in any newspaper without attracting attention." Well, is not that true of the speech of the Irish or any province of England or America? Our dialectic differences are few but important. The speech of Lady Gregory's characters is effective, and more than that, the humor and the pathos of them is deeper than their speech or any peculiar turns of phrase.

Doubtless (as would say Sir Sidney Lee, whom Mr. Moore despises), doubtless Mr. Yeats makes too much of Lady Gregory's discovery of dialect and of his own discovery of Lady Gregory. In the revised version of "Red Hanrahan," he thanks Lady Gregory "who helped me to rewrite The Stories of Red Hanrahan in the beautiful country speech of Kiltartan, and nearer to the tradition of the people among whom he, or some likeness of him, drifted and is remembered." It is little I care, myself being a literary man, whether the metaphors and the syntax and the sentence rhythms were contrived by Mr. Yeats or Lady Gregory or the people of Kiltartan, or whether they are natural to the English tongue of other times and other regions of the world. They are impressive, they convey the story, and they give to the story the strange color appropriate to it. Mr. Yeats plays with verbal color, with lights and darkness in a way that should appeal to so sympathetic a student of the French impressionists as Mr. Moore.

To be sure, there is always the danger of affectation, and the concluding sentences of Mr. Yeats's dedicatory letter to "AE" are pretty close to buncombe. "Ireland, which is still predominantly Celtic, has preserved, with some less excellent things, a gift of vision which has died out among more hurried and more successful nations; no shining candelabra have prevented us from looking into the darkness, and when one looks into the darkness there is always something there." Not always; there may not be anything there worth talking about, not even a black cat. And the man of poetic vision may be a citizen of a relatively successful nation. The eye does not thrive in the dark, but is gradually atrophied. It was not by scrutinizing the dark, but by using his ear and his wonderful visual imagination that Mr. Yeats learned to write the verses in "Red Hanrahan's Curse," verses the like of which no other man can write.

In such verses lives and will live the real Yeats. That some of his verses are obscure and weak does not matter. Greater poets than he have failed at times. And the best of his later verse is his very best; he grows and keeps young, for he has been dipped in some magic well. That he has foibles a plenty is of little moment; greater poets than he have allowed the fool to triumph over the genius sometimes. The divine fool is one of the common themes in poetc legend. Later criticism will assess the value of the "school" that he has founded and appraise his influence in the literary history of Ireland. The function of criticism at the present time is to proclaim the lyric poet and persuade readers to subject themselves to the enchantment of his songs. It is surprising that Mr. Moore, who preaches the gospel of beauty with a fervor worthy of Keats, should not balance his witty strictures with a little more hearty appreciation. He quotes one of his friends as saying that Yeats "took his colleen to London and put paint upon her cheeks and dye upon her hair and sent her up Piccadilly."

And another critic added that the hat and feathers were supplied by Arthur Symons. That is funny enough and serves the purpose of criticism by arousing interest. It also gives other critics opportunity to remind their readers that Yeats's colleen, whether in Sligo or London, is a lovely witch.

One story that Mr. Moore tells of Mr. Yeats is beyond my un-Celtic sense of humor. He represents Mr. Yeats as coming down to luncheon at Lady Gregory's house and saying: "I have had a great morning. I have written eight lines." Where is the joke? It does not seem to be at the expense of the poet. Eight of his lines may seem a poor day's work to so great a man as George Moore. But some of us who have not earned the right to be patronizing would cheerfully devote a month of Sundays, if we knew how, to making one line as good as the best of Yeats. These Irish people rag each other delightfully, and it is more delightful to poke fun than to admire too mutually; perhaps it is more Irish.

Of living Irishmen the two most distinguished writers of prose are George Moore and Bernard Shaw. They resemble each other in two or three particulars. Both are out of sympathy with the modern movement in Irish literature, with the "Celtic revival," with all that revolves about the person of Mr. Yeats. In the introduction to "John Bull's Other Island," Mr. Shaw says (I quote from memory) that he is an old-fashioned Irishman who sees other Irishmen as they really are and not as the young people of the Abbey Theatre imagine them to be. Mr. Moore somewhat grudgingly concedes that Synge was a man of genius and that Lady

Gregory's plays, though inferior to the "Playboy" are all meritorious. But he implies, if he does not directly say, that the only man who really understands the diction of the Irish is George Moore, Esq., of Moore Hall. Another point of resemblance between Shaw and Moore is that both insist on calling themselves shameless; they boast their independence and find satisfaction in contemplating their difference from other people. It is amusing to think that the reading world has long taken them for granted and is no longer shocked. Both are masters of the English tongue, not of a new style full of strange idioms, natural or artificial, but of the straightest sort of classic English, firm as the best prose of the eighteenth century.

It is that English which shall save these Celtic iconoclasts who are now respectable old gentlemen. Irish to the back-bone, they took for foster mother the finest prose of the race that betrayed their country; they became favorite sons of an empire superior to the political and racial divisions of the world. Mr. Moore thinks that the English are a tired race and their weariness betrays itself in the language. "God help the writer who puts pen to paper in fifty years' time, for all that will be left of the language will be a dry shank-bone that has been lying a long while on the dust-heap of empire." A dismal prophecy which is cheerfully contradicted by the facts of literary history. The political empire may be disrupted, Ireland may be freed from English yoke and split in twain. But the language is safe. Artists like Mr. Moore preserve its integrity and renew its vitality. And we have not heard the last of James Joyce and James Stephens, or of one or two young men who were born on the island that lies east of Dublin.

JAMES JOYCE

JAMES JOYCE.

In the preface of "Pendennis" Thackeray says: "Since the author of 'Tom Jones' was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a Man. We must drape him and give him a certain conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art." If Thackery felt that, why did he not take his reputation and his fortune in his hands and, defying the social restrictions which he deplored, paint us a true potrait of a young gentleman of his time? He might have done much for English art and English honesty. As it was, he did as much as any writer of his generation to fasten on English fiction the fetters of a hypocritical reticence. It was only in the last generation that English and Irish novelists, under the influence of French literature, freed themselves from the cowardice of Victorian fiction and assumed that anything human under the sun is proper subject-matter for art. If they have not produced masterpieces (and I do not admit that they have not), they have made a brave beginning. Such a book as "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" would have been impossible forty years ago. Far from looking back with regret at the good old novelists of the nineteenth century (whom, besides, we need never lose), I believe that our fiction is in some respects freer* and richer than the fiction of our immediate forefathers.

Joyce's work is outspoken, vigorous, original, beautiful. Whether it faithfully reflects Irish politics and the emotional conflicts of the Catholic religion one who is neither Irish nor Catholic can not judge with certainty. It seems, however, that the noisy controversies over Parnell and the priests in which the boy's elders indulge have the sound of living Irish voices; and the distracted boy's wrestlings with his sins and his faith are so movingly human that they hold the sympathy even of one who is indifferent to the religious arguments. I am afraid that the religious questions and the political questions are too roughly handled to please the incurably devout and patriotic. If they ever put up a statue of Joyce in Dublin, it will not be during his lifetime. For he is no respecter of anything except art and human nature and language.

There are some who, to turn his own imaginative phrase, will fret in the shadow of his language. He makes boys talk as boys do, as they did in your school and mine, except that we lacked the Irish imagery and whimsicality. If the young hero is abnormal and precocious, that is because he is not an ordinary boy but an artist, gifted with thoughts and phrases above our common abilities. This is a portrait of an artist, a literary artist of the finest quality.

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*If it gets too free, as in Joyce's "Ulysses," it has an official hand clapped on its mouth!

The style is a joy. "Cranly's speech," he writes, "had neither rare phrases of Elizabethan English nor quaintly turned versions of Irish idioms." In that Joyce has defined his own style. It is Elizabethan, yet thoroughly modern; it is racily Irish, yet universal English. It is unblushingly plain-spoken and richly fanciful, like Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. The effect of complete possession of the traditional resources of language is combined with an effect of complete indifference to traditional methods of fiction. Episodes, sensations, dreams, emotions trivial and tragic succeed each other neither coherently nor incoherently; each is developed vividly for a moment, then fades away into the next, with or without the mechanical devices of chapter divisions or rows of stars. Life is so; a fellow is pandied by the schoolmaster for no offense; the cricket bats strike the balls, pick, pock, puck; there is a girl to dream about; and Byron was a greater poet than Tennyson anyhow. . . .

The sufferings of the poor little sinner are told with perfect fidelity to his point of view. Since he is an artist his thoughts appropriately find expression in phrases of maturer beauty than the speech of ordinary boys. He is enamored of words, intrigued by their mystery and color; wherefore the biographer plays through the boy's thoughts with all manner of verbal loveliness.

> Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour? Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language many-coloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose?

From the fading splendor of an evening beautifully described, he tumbles into the sordid day of a house rich in pawn tickets. That is life. "Welcome, O life!" he bids farewell to his young manhood. "I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead."

The sketches in "Dubliners" are perfect, each in its own way, and all in one way: they imply a vast deal that is not said. They are small as the eye-glass of a telescope is small; you look through them to depths and distances. They are a kind of short story almost unknown to the American magazine if not to the American writer. An American editor might read them for his private pleasure, but from his professional point of view he would not see that there was any story there at all. The American short story is explicit and thin as a moving-picture film; it takes nothing for granted; it knows nothing of the art of the hintful, the suggestive, the selected single detail which lodges fertilely in the reader's mind, begetting ideas and emotions. America is not the only offender (for patriotism is the fashion and bids criticism relent); there is much professional Irish humor which is funny enough but no more subtle than a shillalah. And English short stories, such at least as we see in magazines, are obvious and "express" rather than expressive. Joyce's power to disentangle a single thread from the confusion of life and let you run briefly back upon it until you encounter the confusion and are left to think about it yourself—that is a power rare enough in any literature.

Except one story, "A Painful Case," I could not tell the plot of any of these sketches. Because there is no plot going from beginning to end. The plot goes from the surface inward, from a near view away into a background. A person appears for a moment—a priest, or a girl, or a small boy, or a street-corner tough, or a drunken salesman—and does and says things not extraordinary in themselves; and somehow you know all about these people and feel that you could think out their entire lives. Some are stupid, some are pathetic, some are funny in an unhilarious way. The dominant mood is irony. The last story in the book, "The Dead," is a masterpiece which will never be popular, because it is all about living people; there is only one dead person in it and he is not mentioned until near the end. That's the kind of trick an Irishman like Synge or Joyce would play on us, and perhaps a Frenchman or a Russian would do it; but we would not stand it from one of our own writers.

D. H. LAWRENCE

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Mr. Lawrence is a poet in prose and in verse. No writer of his generation is more singular, more unmistakably individual, and no other that I know is endowed with his great variety of gifts. He is as dangerous to public morals as Meredith or Hardy. Readers who cannot understand the tragedy of "Richard Feverel" or of "Jude the Obscure," will not understand Mr. Lawrence or be interested to read a third of the way through one of his books. The stupidity of the multitude is sure protection against his insidious loveliness and essential sadness. He and his admirers will, I hope, regard it as honorable to him that he reminds this critic oftener of Meredith and Hardy than of any of his contemporaries. I am not so fatuous as to suggest that his independent and original work is in any unfavorable sense derivative. It must be true that every young novelist learns his lessons from the older novelists; but I cannot see that Mr. Lawrence is clearly the disciple of any one master. I do feel simply that he is of the elder stature of Meredith and Hardy, and I will suggest, in praise of him, some resemblances that have struck me, without trying to analyze or quote chapter and verse in tedious parallels.

Mr. Lawrence is a lyric as well as a tragic poet. In this he is like Meredith and Hardy, and I can think of no other young novelist who is quite worthy of the company. Young people in love, or some other difficulty, become entangled with stars and mountains and seas; they are baffled and lost, seldom consoled, in cosmic immensities. Novelists who happen also to be poets are enamoured of those immensities.

This is the end of "Sons and Lovers":

"Where was he?—one tiny upright speck of flesh, less than an ear of wheat lost in the field. He could not bear it. On every side the immense dark silence seemed pressing him, so tiny a spark, into extinction, and yet, almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night, in which everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror, and holding each other in embrace, there in the darkness that outpassed them all, and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core nothingness, and yet not nothing."

The concluding scenes of "Women in Love" are the Alps, "a silence of dim, unrealized snow, of the invisible intervening between her and the visible, between her and the flashing stars." I am reminded, by the beauty of the phrasing and by the sense of the pathetic little human being adrift in space, of the flight of the two young people through the Alps, in "The Amazing Marriage," and of farmer Gabriel Oak watching the westward flow of the stars.

Sometimes, like Meredith, rather than like Hardy, whose style is colder and more austere, Mr. Lawrence is almost too lyric and his phrases threaten to overflow the rigid dikes of prose. I could pick out a dozen rhapsodical passages which with little change might well appear in his books of verse.

But young people in love do not spend all their days and nights in ecstatic flights to the clouds. And their flights are followed by pathetic Icarian disasters. From luminous moments they plunge into what Mr. Lawrence calls "the bitterness of ecstacy," and their pain outweighs their joy many times over, as in Hardy, and as in the more genial Meredith, whose rapturous digression played on a penny whistle is a cruelly beautiful preparation for the agonies that ensue. It may be that the emotional transports of Mr. Lawrence's young people are more frequent and violent than the ordinary human soul can enjoy and endure. The nervous tension is high and would break into hysteria if Mr. Lawrence were not a philosopher as well as a poet, if he did not know so accurately what goes on inside the human head, if he had not an artist's ability to keep his balance at the very moment when a less certain workman would lose it.

There is firm ground under his feet and under the feet of his lovers; it is the everyday life which consists of keeping shop and keeping school and other commonplace activities in street, kitchen, and coal mine. These diurnal details he studies with a fidelity not surpassed by Mr. Bennett or any other of his contemporaries. The talk of his people is always alive, both the dialect of the villagers and the discussions of the more intellectual. Sometimes he puts into the speech of his characters a little more of his own poetic fancy than they might reasonably be supposed to be capable of. But if this is a fault, from a realistic point of view, it is a merit from the point of view of readability, and it makes for vivacity. At times—and is not this like Meredith?—he seems to be less interested in the sheer dramatic value of a situation he has created than in the opportunity it offers of writing beautiful things around it. Not that his situations fail to carry themselves or have not their proper place and proportion. Mr. Lawrence knows how to handle his narrative and he has an abundant invention and dramatic ingenuity. But he is above those elementary things that any competent novelist knows. He has the something else that makes the story teller the first rate literary artist—style may be the word for it, but poetic imagination seems to be the better and more inclusive term. Open "The Lost Girl" at page 57 and read two pages. Without knowing what has preceded or whither the story is bound, anybody who knows what literature is will feel at once that that is it.

"Women in Love" is a sequel to "The Rainbow," in that it carries on the story of Ursula of the family of Brangwen. "The Rainbow" is the stronger book; it has more of the tragic power, the deep social implications of Mr. Lawrence's masterpiece, "Sons and Lovers". In "Women in Love" are four young people, two men and two women, whose chief interest, for them and for us, is in amatory relations. This is indicated by the title of the story, one of those obvious titles which only a man of imagination could hit upon, so simple that you wonder why no novelist ever thought of it before. Now the erotic relations of people, though a tremendous part of life, as all the great tragic romances prove, are still only part of life. Nobody knows this better than Mr. Lawrence. The first story of the Brangwen family is richer than the second, not because of the proverbial falling off of sequels, not because Mr. Lawrence's power declined—far from it!—but because the first novel embraces a larger number of the manifold interests that compose the fever called living. In it are not only young lovers, but old people, old failures, the land, the town, the succession of the generations rooted yet restless. Ursula emerges from immemorial centuries of English life, touched with foreign blood out of Poland (when an English novelist wishes to introduce variety and strangeness into the dull solidity of an English town he imports a Pole, or an Italian, or a Frenchman, somebody not English).

Ursula's background is thus richer than all her emotional experience. Her father, her grandfather, the family, the muddled tragicomedy of little affairs and ambitions, the grim, gray colliery district, the entire social situation, are the foundations and walls of the story, and she is the slender spire that surmounts it all—and is struck by lightning. In "The Rainbow" she goes to ashes, and in "Women in Love" she revives, burns again, and finds in her new love new dissatisfaction.

It is impossible to write of Mr. Lawrence without discoursing in symbols and reflecting, somewhat pallidly, his metaphors. For like all genuine poets he is a symbolist. In "Aaron's Rod" he redoubles and compounds symbolism in a manner baffling to readers and to critics who like to have their prose prosaic and their poetry in lines and whose sound stomachs refuse a mixed drink. I enjoy the mixture—in the Bible, in Meredith, in Ruskin, in James, in Lawrence.

It is stupid to explain symbols. Yet after all that is the dull function of criticism, to explain something—as if the creator of a work of art had not given all the necessary explanation in the very act of creation. Whoever does not understand Lawrence on immediate contact will not understand him better after the intervention of a critic. But it is the pleasure and the privilege of a critic to have his secondary imagination set on fire by the primary imagination of a man of genius, to spread the fire if he can by the cold fluid of critical exposition—as water carries burning oil.

Well, then, Aaron's rod is doubly symbolic. His rod which, in the Biblical phrase, bloomed, blossomed and yielded almonds, is a flute. And the symbol is also phallic, as, indeed, it is in the Bible. Aaron's flute, the musical instrument, is smashed in an accident which is as irrational as life itself. The instrument in its other aspect is broken by the supreme and only rationality —that of human character.

In all his books, beginning with "Sons and Lovers," Mr. Lawrence has shown relatively little interest in those mere sequences of external events which novelists artificially pattern into plots. He throws some matter-of-fact probabilities to the winds, as in "Aaron's Rod," when he makes a man from the English colleries a master flautist and alleges that he got a hearing in Italy, where there are more good flautists to the square inch than in England to the square mile.

But Aaron is an unusual person. "It is remarkable," says his creator, "how many odd or extraordinary people there are in England." Mr. Lawrence has always been interested in slightly eccentric characters, and so he stands apart from his contemporaries who call themselves realists or naturalists because they deal with the commonplace or the recognizably normal.

After all, extraordinary persons in fiction, as in life, are better worth knowing than ordinary persons. Mr. Lawrence does not make his people so widely different from the general run of human beings as to put a strain on credulity, and he studies them with a subtle and firm understanding. Their talk sounds real. Their emotions are alive in his bold and delicate prose. He has made amateurish excursions into psychoanalysis, which may or may not be a fruitful subject for a novelist to study. The real novelist has always been a psychologist in an untechnical sense.

Mr. Lawrence is too fine an artist to import into his art the dubious lingo of psycho-analysis; he remains the poet, the dramatist, his symbols and images uncorrupted by pseudo-science. Aaron's dream in the last chapter—no modern novel is complete without at least one dream—is easily "freuded" (cave, corridor, and water symbols), but Mr. Lawrence refrains from analysis.

Aaron's whole life, or as much as the author gives us of it, is a dream, a dream unfulfilled in love or friendship or music. To what he wakes, if he wakes at all, the conclusion leaves us guessing. That will puzzle readers who demand that a story shall finish with a bang or come to a definite point of rest. But life does not conclude; it persists.

When Aaron related his history and experiences to some friends, he "told all his tale as if it was a comedy. A comedy it seemed, too, at that hour. And a comedy no doubt it was. But mixed, like most things in this life. Mixed." Though Aaron is a strange man, an individual, yet the conflict that goes on in him, between his rebellion and his indecision, his desire and his impotence, is not freakish; it is so much like the struggle that every man knows, with special variations, that it is true to universal human nature. Behind the symbolism are the plain facts, solidly conceived.

The other characters in the book are well drawn, notably Aaron's odd, philosophic friend, Lilly, whose ideas are at once clear and cryptic. There is a pitifully accurate portrait of a captain whose soul and nerves had not recovered from the war. In a single chapter through one man Mr. Lawrence suggests the disillusionment, the mental disaster, that followed the armistice. "None of the glamour of returned heroes, none of the romance of war . . . the hot, seared burn of unbearable experience, which did not heal nor cool, and whose irritation was not to be relieved."

In "The Lost Girl" and "Women in Love" the men are subordinate to the women. In "Aaron's Rod" the women are of secondary interest; Aaron's wife is rather indistinct and shadowy, and the Marchesa, the Cleopatra whom he tried to love and couldn't, never quite comes alive, either for Aaron or for the reader. Probably these women are just what Mr. Lawrence intended them to be, as seen through Aaron's temperament. But I do not feel that Mr. Lawrence has here made a very striking contribution to the history of the everlasting warfare between the sexes. Did Aaron miss because he happened not to meet the right woman? Or was he the sort of man whom no woman could capture and satisfy? Evidently Mr. Lawrence means to leave the eternal question unsettled even for the man whom he has created.

Like many other English poets, Mr. Lawrence is a lover of Italy, and he takes his hero there, one suspects, for the sheer joy of the scene and the atmosphere, which he realizes with vivid beauty. He is a master of description, a master of words. His command ranges from the baldest sort of every day conversation to prose harmonies that are as near to verse as prose can go without breaking over. This is not merely a command of style; it is more than that—it is a command of ideas. Mr. Lawrence can pass with equal sureness from colliery to cathedral and find the right word for every thing and person met on the way, the right word, though often a perplexed and perplexing word. Because life is like that. It is "mixed."

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